



**JEWISHcolorado**

BUILDING COMMUNITY TOGETHER

Special Israel Emergency Section | p. 2-11



# Annual Report

July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023



**JEWISHcolorado: We convene, connect,  
invest, and protect Jewish life in Colorado,  
Israel, and around the world.**



**JEWISHcolorado**

BUILDING COMMUNITY TOGETHER

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# Dear Jewish Colorado Community,

We are thrilled to present our annual report, encapsulating the profound impact of JEWISHcolorado over the past fiscal year. This magazine is a tapestry of our mission—convening, connecting, investing, and protecting Colorado's Jewish community, both today and in the boundless horizon of the future.

Join us on a journey as we revisit an unforgettable night at Ball Arena—a night filled with rekindled friendships, the tribute to Nancy Gart with a Lifetime Achievement Award, and a captivating encounter with the distinguished actor and activist, Liev Schreiber.

Turn these pages and uncover our role as a community connector, embodied by two teenagers igniting a new chapter at their high school, the Young Adult Division (YAD) members rising to leadership, and the fervent networking of real estate and construction professionals in Denver and beyond.

JEWISHcolorado is your philanthropic sanctuary, where we share stories of investment, from a grandmother choosing Donor Advised Funds for her grandchildren's future to inspiring women leading with philanthropy. Explore our commitment to community investment through the captivating tale of a day in the life of a Jewish chaplain. Never underestimate our willingness to invest during a crisis. After the wildfire in Lahaina, we jumped into action with our Federation partners, raising funds to help the residents of Maui, and Jewish Federations of North America fundraising for Ukraine has now topped \$90 million.

Our solemn duty as protectors is unwavering. Discover the training we provided for students after a high school tragedy and our continuous mission to fortify community safety through our national affiliation with the Secure Community Network.

Our mission reverberates not only here but across the globe, including Israel. Allow us to introduce our new Shlichah and Shinshinim, who daily forge connections between Colorado and Israel.

Excitement courses through the veins of JEWISHcolorado, evident in the enthusiasm of the 200 attendees at our recent Annual Meeting in August. We eagerly anticipate your presence in the coming year, for it is together that we weave an inclusive, vibrant, and secure Jewish community.

With unwavering commitment,



**Ben Lusher**  
*Board Chair*  
JEWISHcolorado



**Renée Rockford**  
*President & CEO*  
JEWISHcolorado

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Every effort has been made to ensure that the information included in this publication is accurate and complete. If you note any errors or omissions, please accept our apologies and notify JEWISHcolorado at [philanthropy@jewishcolorado.org](mailto:philanthropy@jewishcolorado.org). To update your mailing address, contact us at [philanthropy@jewishcolorado.org](mailto:philanthropy@jewishcolorado.org).

# With Gratitude

The leadership and staff of JEWISHcolorado extend a sincere and heartfelt thank-you to everyone who invested in making the 2022-2023 Annual Campaign a resounding success.

With your help, JEWISHcolorado raised more than \$7.5 million to support programs, events, and initiatives that strengthen a vibrant Colorado Jewish community today and in the future. We surpassed the amount raised for the Annual Campaign last year, thanks to more than 4,700 gifts from the community, including 100% participation from the JEWISHcolorado Board and staff.

How does JEWISHcolorado put your donation into action?

Here are just some of the accomplishments of the past year.

- The Israel & Overseas Center continued the YAD/Ramat HaNegev Exchange sending young adults to our partner region in Israel and bringing six Israelis to Colorado.
- When the city of Denver asked for help, the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) joined with member organization Temple Emanuel to spearhead a massive response to the Colorado migrant crisis.
- In response to the ongoing war in Ukraine, JEWISHcolorado continues to partner with international organizations and raise funding that will support the Ukrainian people.
- This year, JEWISHcolorado

trained more 1,500 people in emergency preparedness through our Regional Safety & Security Initiative.

- JEWISHcolorado family, children, and teen programs continue to flourish and grow, ensuring a new generation of young people will learn and practice Jewish values.
- JEWISHcolorado events connect people throughout the community. The Signature Event in February with actor and activist Liev Schreiber drew 800 registrations, and nearly 2,000 participants walked to Celebrate Israel @75 in May.

To all who were first-time donors this year, we thank you for joining our mission. To those who have supported this organization for many decades, we are grateful for your ongoing trust, and we will continue to work to earn it. □





# A Look Back at the Birth of JEWISHcolorado



October 1, 2023, marked a significant JEWISHcolorado anniversary.

On that date 10 years ago, the Allied Jewish Federation of Colorado was renamed JEWISHcolorado.

Together, the Federation, which was formed in 1946, and JEWISHcolorado, with one decade of existence, boast 77 years of distinguished history and uninterrupted service to Colorado's Jewish community. But the name change still occasionally causes confusion.

"For the community that had grown up with the name 'Federation,' this was not an entirely comfortable transition," says Noel Ginsburg, who served as both Federation Campaign Chair and Board Chair before the rebranding and has been a long-time supporter of JEWISHcolorado. "People are comfortable with what they grow up with. Even I occasionally still say 'Federation.'"

"We would go to people who had been involved for years, and they would say, 'What happened to the Allied Jewish Federation?'" adds Judy Robins, who served as both Campaign Chair and Board Chair for the Federation and was one of the leaders of the team that led the efforts to reinvent

the Federation in a new century. "It took a long time for people who had been involved for years to understand the benefits of modernizing this organization."

But while the name has changed, and the organization has evolved, JEWISHcolorado still carries on the same broad mission it had when it was referred to simply as "the Federation." It is Colorado's convener organization, connecting people Jewishly to each other, the community, and the global Jewish world. It is the philanthropic home for Jews in Colorado, powering the Jewish community through advocacy, security, education, and investment.

The name change also did not alter JEWISHcolorado's relationship with the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA). It is still an active JFNA member, with JEWISHcolorado representatives

joining other Federation leaders on two trips to Israel as recently as April 2023 for meetings with diverse Israeli leaders and for the JFNA General Assembly.

You might ask, "So why rebrand? Why change the name of a long-established organization even though its goals remain largely the same?" To answer that question, you have to travel back in time to see how the world of philanthropy, nonprofits, and Jewish life was changing as Colorado moved from the 20th to the 21st century.

## Looking into the future

During the years Noel Ginsburg served as Board Chair of the Federation, he and other leaders looked into the future and saw changes on the horizon.

"We had to begin to address challenges that were facing Federations across the country," he says. "They were flat in growth



and there was a general sense that the Federation was not as appealing to a younger generation as it was to our parents.”

At the same time, Ginsburg describes an environment where nonprofits were “proliferating” during the 1990s as more nonprofits were coming into existence. For some people, *tikkun olam* meant caring for the Jewish community—but for others, it meant caring for the larger community as well, spreading donations across many different nonprofits both Jewish and non-Jewish.

Whether they were older organizations that now needed to supplement Federation funding or newly created nonprofits asking for support—there was now more competition for donor dollars that may have traditionally gone to the Federation.

Ginsburg also recalls watching what he describes as a “mega trend”—the development of the Internet where people could donate directly with just a few clicks. With an umbrella organization like the Federation, donors gave to one organization

and did not know how their gift was used. With the Internet, they could target their gifts.

“People started to want to give themselves, they wanted to be closer to their dollars, designating their gifts,” he says. “If that is what the customer asks for, you need to be able to offer it.”

Ginsburg and other leaders of the time had the wisdom to see that, if the Federation were going to thrive, it would have to look ahead to the next century, contemporize with multiple strategies, and reestablish itself as a leadership organization with a clearly defined mission in the community. Changing the name and enabling people to direct their gifts if they chose would be two of the strategies in this organizational reinvention.

## Taking action to reimagine the Federation

Judy Robins laughs when she recalls the phone call in 2008 from Mark Sidell, then chair of the Federation, asking if she would like to succeed him as chair.

“I said, ‘Are you kidding? You really

want me?’” she says. “‘You must be joking—I’m yesterday’s news!’”

She agreed to take on the role and quickly saw the handwriting on the wall. The country was headed into the Great Recession, adding more pressure to the challenges that Ginsburg had already identified and accelerating the need to take action.

“It was a very hard time of financial crisis, economic stress, and uncertainty,” Robins says. “People were worried about their personal finances and concerned about their level of giving. Philanthropic dollars were in jeopardy. We needed the glue of the Federation to hold people together. But with decreased support, how were we going to survive and thrive?”

Robins, Nancy Gart, Doug Seserman, who was the President & CEO at the time of the rebranding, and a core team of about 15 people led the strategic planning effort called “Reimagining Federation for the 21st Century,” with a goal of highlighting JEWISHcolorado programs and services and broadening the appeal and relevance of the





organization, building stronger relationships with donors and providing more opportunities for giving, particularly among a new generation of donors.

They decided to take several key steps, starting with the rebranding.

“We felt that ‘Allied Jewish Federation’ did not sound enough like ‘Colorado,’” Robins says.

“The name ‘JEWISHcolorado’ was a more inclusive umbrella that would represent Jews across the state. We hoped this would help people feel they were involved in the decision-making of the organization, and over time, I think it has begun to resonate for people which makes the organization more representative.”

In a second step, the Reimagining Committee took inspiration from the oft-used adage, “United we stand, divided we fall.” In a move to unite, JEWISHcolorado absorbed two other organizations: The Jewish Community Foundation and the Colorado Agency for Jewish Education. By consolidating all three organizations, overhead costs were reduced by \$1 million

annually through the reduction of duplication in administrative costs.

Finally, JEWISHcolorado continued the “Total Choice Tzedakah” program established in 2003 which allowed donors to designate their money for specific Jewish organizations. JEWISHcolorado also has expanded the use of Donor Advised Funds, which are managed by JEWISHcolorado experts in the field. Through these funds, donors have ultimate flexibility in determining what, when, and how much they want to give to organizations they choose.

## The future

Change takes leadership, courage, and foresight, and it is not easy. But with time, people have come to understand how JEWISHcolorado continues the best of the past while creating new programs, events, experiences, and giving opportunities for the future.

“With the changes we made, we sent the message that JEWISHcolorado is the community convener,” says Robins. “We bring people together, and if you want

to be philanthropic in the Jewish community, JEWISHcolorado is the place to go because our primary focus is on Jewish causes and Jewish continuity.

“This organization will always be a work in progress,” Robins adds. “But we are looking at what is in our headlights not at what is in our rearview mirror.”

For Noel Ginsburg, the name may be less important than the role JEWISHcolorado plays.

“If there is a global or domestic threat, you want JEWISHcolorado to be there because it can mobilize in a way nobody else can,” he says. “If you don’t have the infrastructure, you can’t respond. And we have that. To me that is essential, critical, and it’s why I support JEWISHcolorado.

“The fact that it has been willing to reinvent itself says it is listening and it is healthy,” Ginsburg continues. “It cannot be the same organization it was when my parents were young. The challenges to our community have changed and it is essential for the Jewish community to be able to respond to those challenges.” □



# A Conversation with President & CEO Renée Rockford

*Renée Rockford was named JEWISHcolorado's new President & CEO on July 1, 2023. We asked her to share some thoughts on the state of the organization—today and in the future.*



**Q.** Renée, you came to this position after first serving as JEWISHcolorado's Chief Advancement Officer for a year and then as the Interim President & CEO since the last quarter of 2022. What about your experience as an interim leader led you to decide to take on the role officially?

**A.** During my time as an interim leader, I really grew to love this organization and its history. I so admire the staff who are dedicated to continuing the legacy of JEWISHcolorado. Working with the Board of Trustees, I have been struck by their passionate commitment. I have never seen a group of people who have put so much time, energy, and financial resources into an organization and the community. These experiences confirmed and validated for me that, at this point in my career, this

is the work I want to do. This is my destination—serving the Jewish community.

**Q.** What do you find most exciting—and what do you find most daunting—about this new position?

**A.** Right now, Jewish organizations are in a position where they must evaluate themselves. We are operating in a new paradigm of opportunities and challenges—and on top of that, we are still reckoning with a new post-pandemic normal. It is a very interesting moment in the history of the Colorado Jewish community and all diaspora Jews, a moment when we must ask big questions. Where did we come from? Where are we going? How does our relationship with Israel fit into our thinking? I think there is only one answer to both your questions. Our challenges are both exciting and daunting!

**Q.** Through fundraising, JEWISHcolorado

supports its own programs as well as other programs that are important to sustaining a vibrant Jewish life and culture in Colorado. These days, everyone receives many requests for support. How does JEWISHcolorado rise to the top in this competitive fundraising atmosphere?

**A.** JEWISHcolorado is no longer just the fundraiser and allocator organization that many people think of when they think of the old Federation. We are so much more. We play a unique role as a convener, connector, investor, and protector for all organizations in our Jewish community including synagogues, nonprofits, community centers, and more. We are in partnership with the community, so that when people give to JEWISHcolorado, they are giving to the larger Jewish community and to its continuity here at home, in Israel, and around the world.



“These experiences confirmed and validated for me that, at this point in my career, this is the work I want to do. This is my destination—serving the Jewish community.”

**Q.** The future lies with a new generation of young people who have unique ways of communicating and socializing. How is JEWISHcolorado effectively connecting with young people?

**A.** It is very gratifying to see the number of young people who want to come to work at JEWISHcolorado. Through our staff, we connect with young people in the community in many ways—whether it is nearly sold-out Shabbat programs for young adults mounted by our Young Adult Division or the ways we support young families with children through PJ Library or the opportunities to grow and see the world with the Jewish Federations of North America Cabinet program. These are just some of the many ways we are working to ensure that new leaders are being developed and JEWISHcolorado will continue from generation to generation.

**Q.** JEWISHcolorado has made a commitment to the safety of the state’s citizenry through the Secure

Community Network and, locally, with the Regional Safety & Security Initiative. It’s an ambitious task—seeking to protect both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations. Why is it important?

**A.** This may be the most important work we are doing, and it has become the face of JEWISHcolorado for the larger community. We launched this initiative after the Tree of Life shootings in 2018, and since then, we have created a baseline of security for all Colorado Jewish organizations, ensuring that safety is a priority. We are also a community protector, practicing *pikuach nefesh*, the preservation of life in the wider community, by sharing our expertise. This work carries a huge responsibility. Part of what makes it challenging is that not everyone is aware that it is spearheaded and funded by JEWISHcolorado.

**Q.** It is no secret that this has been a year of tumult in Israel. You traveled to Israel twice this spring on behalf of JEWISHcolorado with the Jewish Federations of North America. What was your take-away from

the conversations you had on these trips?

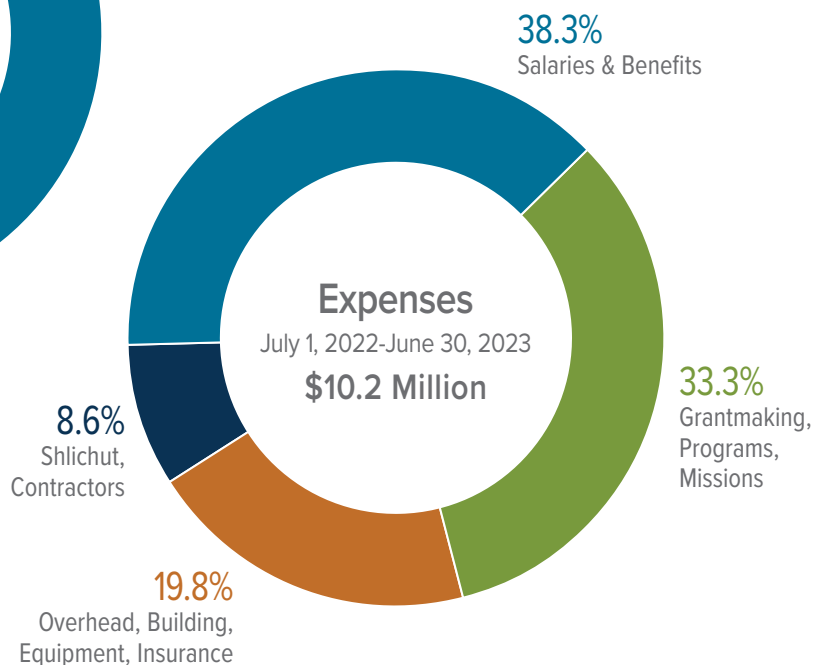
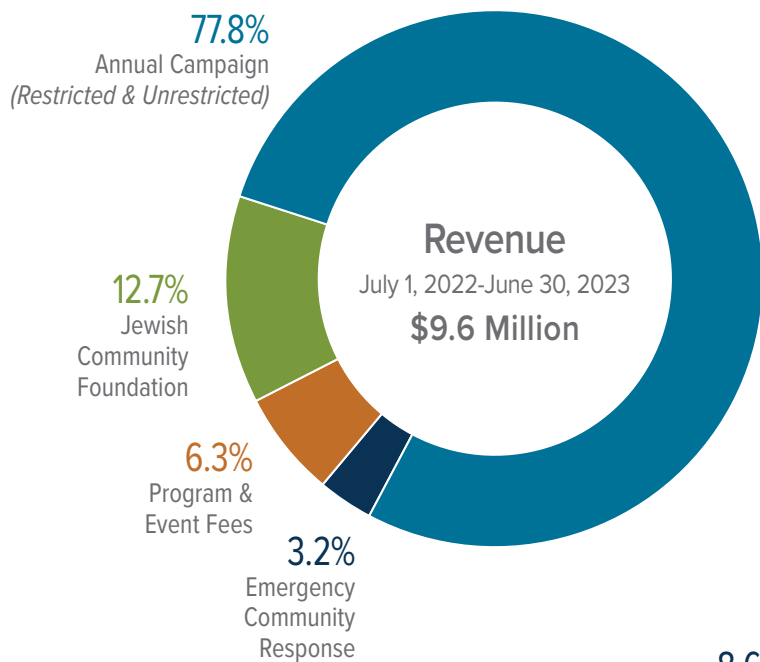
**A.** We met with leadership representing diverse factions in Israel. I left Israel convinced that there will only be progress if conversations continue. Israel continues to be a partner with the Jewish diaspora and all that we mean to each other. It is important that, even during tumultuous times, we hold our relationship with Israel close to our heart.

**Q.** JEWISHcolorado has existed for more than 75 years, for part of that time under the banner of the Allied Jewish Federation of Colorado. There may be some in the Jewish community who were enthusiastic supporters during the Federation years but have not been as involved in recent years. How do you persuade those people to again invest their time and talents with JEWISHcolorado?

**A.** If you care about the Jewish community in Colorado, in Israel, in the world, this is not a time to step back. If you want this organization to fulfill its mission, it is the time to step up. □

# JEWISHcolorado Operating Budget

July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023\*



\*Audited financials

## A Year of JEWISHcolorado Impact



### July '22

Since the establishment of the Regional Safety & Security Initiative in 2018, JEWISHcolorado has provided emergency preparedness and response training to more than 4,800 people in more than 100 Jewish organizations as well as other nonprofit community groups.



### August '22

Author, educator, journalist, and “Unorthodox” podcaster Mark Oppenheimer speaks at Rocky Mountain Chai to JEWISHcolorado audiences in Vail, Aspen, and Denver about his book *Squirrel Hill: The Tree of Life Synagogue Shooting and the Soul of a Neighborhood*.



# Frequently Asked Questions

In many nonprofit reports, financial information is normally found tucked into the back of a publication, but not this one. Your support for JEWISHcolorado and the ways we put your philanthropic dollars to work are first and foremost. You place your trust in this more than 75-year-old organization to work on your behalf, to strengthen and secure our statewide Jewish community, and to connect Jewish people at home and abroad, and we are here to deliver.

## By the Numbers: Three organizations & five business models

JEWISHcolorado is made up of three historical stand-alone organizations. From 2013-2016, JEWISHcolorado merged three organizations into one—melding the missions and work of the **Allied Jewish Federation of Colorado**, the **Jewish Community Foundation**, and the **Colorado Agency for Jewish Education**.

The Jewish Community Relations Council is also operated under the auspices of JEWISHcolorado, and the Regional Safety & Security Initiative, in partnership with national and local partners, also finds its home here.

We are a complex, far-reaching organization whose mission is to build community and create connections among Jewish people in Colorado, Israel, and around the world.



## September '22

JEWISHcolorado's launch of the Real Estate & Construction Network is met with great enthusiasm from professionals looking for a way to network and do business. PJ Library celebrates the delivery of its 50 millionth book.



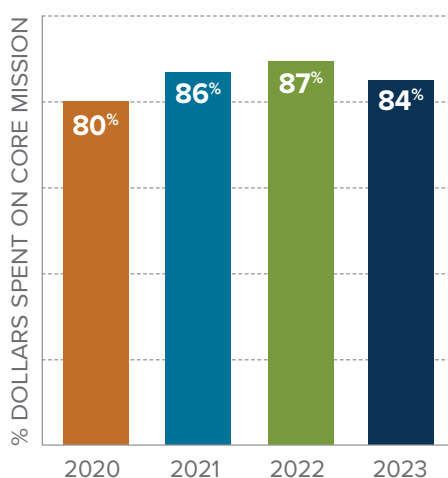
## October '22

Julie Platt, Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Jewish Federations of North America, speaks at the Women's Philanthropy event "Cultivating Hope."

## Expense Mission Ratio: Percent of dollars spent on core mission

Our core mission includes program delivery, grant making, and services that we provide to the community such as safety and security trainings. Activities that are not considered to be part of our core mission but are critical to our operation are activities such as fundraising and administrative costs.

**Percent of Dollars Spent  
on Core Mission** (2020-2023)



## How much is spent in operating and non-operating dollars?

JEWISHcolorado has an approximate **\$9 million\*** annual operating budget

### The operating and non-operating assets

under JEWISHcolorado management, which includes Donor Advised Funds and agency endowments, **equal nearly \$80 million\***.

This includes 225 Donor Advised Funds, 26 Agency Endowments, and restricted and unrestricted dollars raised by JEWISHcolorado.

- The organization processes nearly **\$1.4 million\*** in **pass-through charitable gifts** to other nonprofit organizations through the Total Choice Tzedakah program.

\*Audited financials

## What are our revenue sources?

- Grants & philanthropic gifts from the community;
- Event ticket and sponsorship fees;
- Investment stewardship;
- Program delivery fees.

## Where does the money that we raise go?

### Dollars sent back into the community:

- Grants to support Jewish life in Colorado—Projects of Impact & Need (PIN), Community Support Partnership (CSP), allocations;
- Grants to support global JEWISH partners—Jewish Agency for Israel, Joint Distribution Committee, World ORT, and other organizations;
- Dollars to cover cost of the Regional Safety & Security Initiative statewide;
- Dollars for emergency funding such as the Boulder Fire Relief Fund, the Ukraine Emergency Fund, and the Hurricane Ian Fund.

## A Year of JEWISHcolorado Impact (continued)



### November '22

The Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) participates in vigils and offers resources to members of the Colorado Springs community after the Club Q shooting. Seven Coloradans travel to Israel as part of the YAD Ramat HaNegev Exchange.



### December '22

The JCRC helps to mobilize the community in response to a sudden flood of new migrants arriving in Denver. JEWISHcolorado sends 20 women to the International Lion of Judah Conference. Grandparents and their grandchildren travel to Israel for the G2 program.



## What programs are provided for the community by JEWISHcolorado:

- Shaliach and shinshinim adult and teen Israeli Emissaries Program;
- Israel & Overseas Programs;
- PJ Library & PJ Our Way;
- Early Childhood Education scholarships;
- One Happy Camper camp grants;
- Jewish Explorers for Jewish and multifait families;
- Jewish Student Connection for high school students;
- Joyce Zeff Israel Study Tour for high school juniors;
- Advocacy efforts through the Jewish Community Relations Council;
- Shalom Hartman Courageous Conversations Program;
- Safety & Security trainings, site assessments, microgrants, and Nonprofit Security Grant assistance.



### January '23

JEWISHcolorado continues its ongoing fundraising efforts to support Ukrainians as the war enters a second year. Governor Jared Polis speaks at the Real Estate & Construction Network event at Safta.



### February '23

Actor and activist Liev Schreiber charms a crowd of more than 800 people, and Nancy Gart receives the Lifetime Achievement Award for 45 years of service to Jewish organizations at JEWISHcolorado's Signature Event in Ball Arena.

## How many grants does JEWISHcolorado provide each year to community organizations?

JEWISHcolorado made 125 grants in Colorado in FY '23 through grantmaking programs including Projects of Impact & Need (PIN Grants), Staenberg Anything Grants, and Community Support Program (CSP Grants). Additionally, JEWISHcolorado allocates \$100K in grants to the Jewish day schools, provides grant dollars for specific programs run by Jewish Family Service, and has provided hundreds of thousands of dollars in emergency relief dollars for victims of the Marshall Fire near Boulder as well as for Ukrainian War refugees.

## How are we reaching and connecting Jewish people in our community?

Number of interactions with individuals through programs

and events in FY '23: 55,851.

Number of interactions with Jewish agencies and nonprofit organizations: 1,465.

## Why do people give to JEWISHcolorado?

When we asked, here is what they told us: "I think it's important to give to the organization because it's all about being part of the local community and also part of the global community."

"I support JEWISHcolorado so that newcomers like me and also people who have been in the community a long time have a community around them like I received when I came to Colorado."

"We help so many people in the community. We help so many organizations in the community. We do so much for Israel. We are not an isolated organization. We reach out to everyone. That's why I am more than happy to contribute to JEWISHcolorado."

## Your Giving Sustains Our Community

A Donor Advised Fund (DAF) is a philanthropic vehicle that allows you to support virtually any IRS-qualified 501(c)(3) public charity.

Contributions to a JEWISHcolorado DAF are immediately tax-deductible, allowing you to maximize your tax benefits through gifts of appreciated stock or non-publicly traded assets. While you decide which charities to support, you can recommend how you would like your assets invested. And your DAF grows tax-free, making even more money available for charitable giving.

*For information on DAFs, contact Jen Kraft, [jkraft@jewishcolorado.org](mailto:jkraft@jewishcolorado.org).*

## A Year of JEWISHcolorado Impact (continued)



### March '23

The JCRC gathers for its annual luncheon "A Leadership Celebration" at History Colorado with remarks from Gov. Jared Polis and keynote speaker Ellen Germain, U.S. Department of State Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues. Steven Demby is honored with the JCRC Community Leadership Award for his decades of pro-Israel activism and political engagement around the country.



### April '23

JEWISHcolorado convenes more than 200 Coloradans at the Hebrew Educational Alliance to mark Yom HaZikaron, Israel's official Remembrance Day dedicated to fallen soldiers and victims of terrorism. JEWISHcolorado joins other federation leaders in Israel to meet with Israeli leadership representing diverse political viewpoints.



# Jewish Community Foundation



NUMBER OF DONOR  
ADVISED FUNDS (DAF)

225

DAF GRANTS  
DISTRIBUTED  
IN FY '23:

780

DAF GRANT-  
MAKING:

\$11M\*



NUMBER OF  
ENDOWED FUNDS

61

CUSTODIAL  
AGENCY FUNDS

26



OTHER  
FUNDS

24

\*Audited financials



## May '23

Nearly 2,000 members and allies of the Jewish community meet at Denver's Great Lawn Park for "Celebrate Israel," Colorado's largest festival dedicated to the people, culture, and land of Israel. JEWISHcolorado bids farewell to Shaliach Itai Divinsky after four years.



## June '23

The 2023 Joyce Zeff Israel Study Tour travels to Poland for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic before continuing their journey to Israel. JEWISHcolorado awards \$68,000 in 2023 Staenberg Anything Grants™ to Jewish nonprofit organizations in Colorado seeking to fund operations, a specific project, or program.

# Signature Event and Liev Schreiber Pack Ball Arena

The weather outside might have been bone-chillingly cold and blustery, but the atmosphere inside Ball Arena on the evening of Wednesday, February 22, was warm and convivial. In the same space that usually is home to the Avalanche on ice or the Nuggets on the court, more than 800 people gathered for JEWISHcolorado's Signature Event, brought together by the opportunity to enjoy an excellent meal in an impressive venue, share laughter and hugs with old and new friends, bestow awards on several young leaders in the community, and honor Nancy Gart with a Lifetime Achievement Award for 45 years of volunteer service.

Special guests included Colorado Attorney General Phil Weiser, but what may have made this evening unforgettable for many was the main speaker: Actor, Director, Screenwriter, Producer, and Narrator Liev Schreiber who is best known for his role as the bat-wielding Ray Donovan.

In a wide-ranging conversation with Temple Emanuel Associate Rabbi Emily Hyatt, Schreiber reflected on his Jewish heritage, the personal impact of his Ukrainian immigrant grandfather, his volunteer work in Ukraine since the war began, and two upcoming films in which he plays major roles.

By the end of the evening, guests left with renewed commitment to their community, bolstered by a better understanding of the role JEWISHcolorado plays representing Jewish interests in Colorado, supporting those in need both at home and around the world, and sustaining a vibrant Jewish life for this generation and the next.

## Liev Schreiber

As he demonstrated at the Signature Event, Liev Schreiber may be the antithesis of the stereotypical self-involved celebrity. He is unfailingly polite, generous with this time and ideas, gracious with people, and willing to engage in conversation with anyone who wants to talk with him. Schreiber's conversation with Rabbi Hyatt was wide-ranging, from his favorite role (Ricky Roma in *Glengarry Glen Ross* for which he won a Tony Award) to his aspirations as a child ("I wanted to be a handball player."). Their discussion ranged from serious topics (the war in Ukraine) to light-hearted ones (LEGOLAND®) which kept the crowd laughing.

Earlier in his day, Schreiber had spent time touring the Golda Meir House in Denver.

Schreiber also talked about his decision to do volunteer work in Ukraine during the past year ("It

made me feel alive again.") which has taken him to Ukraine multiple times where he has met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. "It is extraordinary how he has stood up for his people and stood his ground," Schreiber said. "Not to mention that he is Jewish.

"It made me remember my grandfather and his generation who were willing to fight in a war for their principles," he continued. "This is what America is about. The moment is now. We have to remind the world who we still are."

## 'What is JEWISHcolorado?'

JEWISHcolorado Board Chair Rob Kaufmann opened the evening by reminding the crowd that it was just one year ago that Russia was massing troops on the border of Ukraine preparing for an invasion. The theme of Ukrainian resilience and heroism in this David and Goliath battle recurred throughout the evening.

"Through this crisis, and many others, JEWISHcolorado has been steadfast—leading our community, supporting those in need, keeping us apprised, staying connected to Israel, creating Jewish life for people of all ages, and serving as your Jewish philanthropic home," Kaufmann said. "If our community is strong, then JEWISHcolorado is strong. If JEWISHcolorado is





strong, our community is strong.”

JEWISHcolorado President & CEO Renée Rockford addressed the crowd, which packed the room, and gave voice to an important question: “What is JEWISHcolorado?”

She pointed out that JEWISHcolorado is the traditional Federation. It is also the Jewish Community Foundation, stewarding millions of dollars in community assets, the Israel & Overseas Center which connects to Jews abroad, the center for Jewish advocacy with the Jewish Community Relations Council, and the center for Jewish education.

“Alone we are nothing,” Rockford said. “But together, with long-time invested families and many newcomers, together with community partners—the synagogues, rabbis and cantors, the teachers, the schools and agencies, the JCCs, the JCRC-member organizations, community and governmental partners, sister organizations working in

and for Israel—together, we are JEWISHcolorado.”

## The awards

Campaign chair Lisa Mintz took the podium to bestow awards on outstanding young adult leaders. The Charlotte B. Tucker Young Leadership Award was given to two individuals: Carly Schlafer for her leadership of JEWISHcolorado’s Young Adult Division and Erin Adlerstein for work she has done at Temple Beit Torah. The Warren & Ruth Toltz Young Leadership Award was given to Hirsch Neustein for his involvement in Jewish life both in Colorado and around the world. Samantha Raizen Walsh earned the Michael Staenberg Young Jewish Agency Professional Award for her commitment to Jewish life and learning.

Then, Mintz introduced the night’s star honoree—Nancy Gart. “Today is Nancy Gart Day in the City and County of Denver,” Mintz said. “In his proclamation, Mayor Michael Hancock described Nancy as

“a kind, generous, longstanding community volunteer whose selfless dedication is fundamental to the continuity of thriving communities.”

Characteristically humble, Nancy thanked the community for their support. “I have been blessed with so many opportunities that have enabled me to work with talented professionals and committed lay leaders,” she said. “I’ve had the pleasure to learn from those who came before me, to work with my peers, to continue their work, and now, I look forward to a strong future with the vibrant young leaders I see before me.”

In the final remarks of the program, Incoming Board Chair Ben Lusher told the crowd about his personal experiences with the Joyce Zeff Israel Study Tour, Moishe House, PJ Library, and the Jewish Community Relations Council.

“As the beating heart of JEWISHcolorado, you know that it takes real resources to build community,” he said. “This is our signature event, and we are looking to all of you to help us continue the momentum.” □

# IST Returns to Poland for Unforgettable Experiences

It had been four years since students on the Joyce Zeff Israel Study Tour (IST) had walked the streets of Warsaw and Krakow, but with the removal of COVID-19 travel restrictions, students on the 2023 trip returned to Poland, where, for the first time, the itinerary included a Shabbat.

Beginning their five-week trip in what was a remarkable center for Jewish culture and life for a thousand years before the Nazis and then tracing the attempted genocide of the Jewish people established an incredibly powerful narrative for students.

IST, one of the few community-based trips still in existence in the U.S., has created an enduring legacy for multiple generations of people who have participated in the program. This year's travelers included the grandchildren of some of the trip's founders, including the grandson of Temple Sinai Rabbi Emeritus Ray Zwerin, and two grandsons of Temple Emanuel Rabbi Emeritus Steven Foster.

## Walking in the footsteps of those who died

The Poland itinerary began at the final resting place of a quarter of a million Jews, the infamous Warsaw Cemetery, one of the largest cemeteries in the world. The now densely forested cemetery dates back to 1806 and includes 83

acres of marked graves, as well as the mass graves of many who died in the Warsaw Ghetto.

Students next visited a remnant of the wall of the Warsaw ghetto, providing a concrete understanding of how Jews and Christians in Poland were separated only by the shared brick wall in an apartment building—a wall that defined life and death. Students sat atop the monument not far away that marked Mila 18, the headquarters bunker where members of the Jewish resistance hid inside the ghetto, and finally, they stopped at the Umschlagplatz, the platform and last gathering place of thousands of Jews before they were sent to the Treblinka Death Camp.

The following day, students traveled to the Majdanek Nazi concentration and extermination camp on the outskirts of the town of Lublin where they saw what is left of one of the largest camps built during the war. At one time, Majdanek comprised 227 structures, including seven gas chambers. The Germans exterminated thousands of Jews here in plain view—adjacent to the farms of Lubliners and less than a mile from the community's center.

One student said, "You read and watch movies, and you can know as much as possible. There is something very different about being there in person. The

barracks and gas chambers were such small and simple buildings. I don't know what words to use. But it is just insane that you can do something so horrible in such a simple and non-complex place. It is indescribable."

Many of the next stops were designed to teach students about the vibrant Jewish life that existed in Poland and Europe before the world wars, including the Chachmei Lublin Yeshiva, a 16th-century synagogue in Lancut, and The Remu Synagogue, Tempel Synagogue, and Jozefa Street in Krakow.

## The legacy of Auschwitz-Birkenau

Toward week's end, students arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau where the full horror of the extermination of 1.5 million Jewish people is on display; students saw the watchtowers, fences, cell blocks, the Death Wall, crematoria, and the notorious gate that reads, "Arbeit Macht Frei," or "Work Sets You Free."

At Auschwitz, they wandered past the enormous display cases of hair and braids shaved from the heads of dead bodies and past rooms of suitcases, shoes, pots and pans, and mounds of prosthetics. Students began to face the horror that can only begin to be comprehended by being there in person. "We are so fortunate to know one or two of these people,"



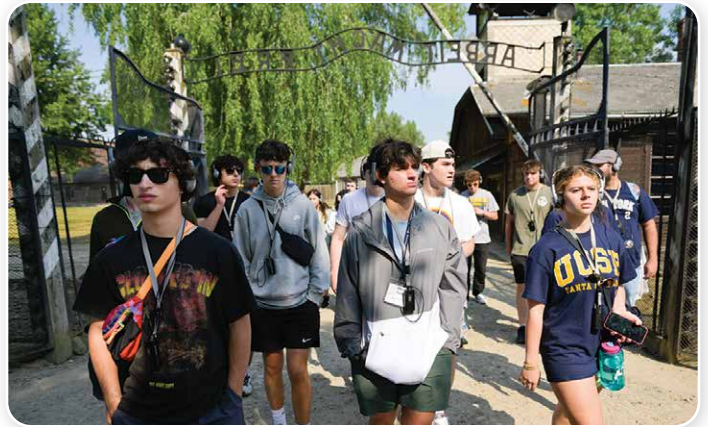
they said about remaining Holocaust survivors.

Students finished the week in Krakow, where they saw many signs of Jewish life returning to Poland. On Saturday morning, some students attended Shabbat services at the 16th-century historic Remah Synagogue in the Kazimierz district. The IST'ers completed the minyan, and nearly every one of them received an aliyah. One student said it was the most meaningful experience of their life.

In a fitting end to the week, students were welcomed for Shabbos lunch at the Krakow JCC where Executive Director Jonathan Ornstein described the more than 100 people who come to the JCC weekly for Friday night dinner or for the Yiddish and Hebrew classes now offered. Ornstein implored the students to remember that Judaism's legacy emerging from the Holocaust is not death—it is life.

Said one student, "I feel more Jewish than ever. I think that this trip has made me even more proud of my Judaism. There are people who don't know or don't care that they are Jewish, but it is important to keep our legacy alive."

*For more information about the Joyce Zeff Israel Study Tour, please contact Jillian Feiger at [jfeiger@jewishcolorado.org](mailto:jfeiger@jewishcolorado.org). □*





# What Does YAD Mean to Me?

**R**achel Silvestain is a third-generation Denver native who has participated in YAD for 10 years.

*She has served as Chair of the Ambassadors Program and on the Executive Board. In contrast, Omer Shachar was born in Israel and became involved in YAD relatively recently, after moving to Denver a couple years ago. He has just hosted his first event as a new Ambassador. Recently, they talked with JEWISHcolorado about what their experience with YAD means to them.*

## How did you initially find YAD?

**Rachel:** I was involved with BBYO in high school and with Hillel and Chabad in college, so it seemed a natural progression for me to continue being involved in YAD as

a young professional. I started with the Chicago Federation's YAD, and when I moved back to Denver six years ago, I continued with JEWISHcolorado. It is an excellent way for young people to support each other at different stages of their lives.

**Omer:** I was living in New York City, and like many others, I moved to Denver to be closer to nature. People that I met here told me about different Jewish organizations including YAD. I started coming to events and discovered it's a great way to meet people and create community in a very comfortable way.

## Why did you decide to get more involved with YAD?

**Rachel:** Initially, the number one reason for me to get involved was the opportunity to socialize.

No matter what activity we are doing, there is just something special about being with the Jewish community. I also saw an opportunity for personal and career development through YAD. There was the chance to network with other young professionals and raise my sense of self by being a leader.

**Omer:** When I moved to Denver, I didn't know anyone here, so meeting new people was a priority for me. With YAD, I found a community of like-minded young people. It also provided some interesting opportunities for professional networking.

## Both of you have taken a next step to become part of YAD's leadership team. That's a significant commitment. Why did you want to do it?

**Rachel:** The longer you stay with



“...it's a great way to meet people and create community in a very comfortable way.”

Omer Shachar

Omer Shachar (middle) at YAD  
ELEVATE in November 2022



Rachel Silvestain (middle) at YAD ELEVATE in November 2022



YAD, the better the chance you have for building long-lasting relationships, and that makes you want to become even more involved. Growing my role into a leadership role reflected my desire to take the program that I enjoyed in my young twenties and help create that for a new generation.

**Omer:** People helped me when I first moved here and now, as an Ambassador, I can pay it forward. I just hosted a Party of Eight, a dinner where you can have intimate conversations and then afterwards, we join other groups at a bar for socializing. These events give me a chance to connect with even more people and make new friends at the same time I am helping other newcomers. As a leader, you can also be an influencer and drive the organization's decisions.

## In what ways is YAD inclusive?

**Omer:** To me, it seems the events we do are not about religious practice. They are a way to connect with your Jewish identity and stay involved with Jewish culture. They are welcoming to all people regardless of religious practices.

**Rachel:** YAD has something for everyone. You will be able to find an event you like because YAD has such a variety of programs—whether it's a 500-person Shabbat or a 15-person video game tournament. If you try out one of the smaller niche events and then you do go to the large Shabbat, someone will say, "Great seeing you last week! Come sit at my table." YAD welcomes everyone.

## How does YAD fit into the bigger picture at JEWISHcolorado?

**Omer:** JEWISHcolorado provides

space and services to people at every stage of their lives in the Jewish community. Encouraging young adults to get and stay involved is important since people have a lot of life-changing events at this age—finding a partner, getting married, and having children. YAD keeps young professionals in the Jewish community and sets up future leaders.

**Rachel:** What gets me excited today is that you can see, from the top down, how important YAD is to JEWISHcolorado. YAD provides a path of leadership to JEWISHcolorado leadership. Organizations have to constantly change with the times. What worked five or ten years ago will not work today. By valuing a variety of opinions and taking pride in creating a new generation of leaders, JEWISHcolorado creates a stronger organization. □

*For more information about the Young Adult Division (YAD), please contact Jenna Raimist at [jraimist@jewishcolorado.org](mailto:jraimist@jewishcolorado.org).*

# JCRC Legislative Accomplishments During the 2023 Session

Each year, the 40 Jewish community-based organizations represented on JEWISHcolorado's Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) work with our lobbying partners at The Capstone Group to ensure that the interests and needs of Jewish and other minority and marginalized communities are represented before the state's legislative and executive branches.

Some years, we take it upon ourselves to lead legislation through the process—such as the 2022 HB-1077 Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP). Other years, we support important legislative initiatives brought forth by member organizations and community partners. The 2023 legislative session saw JCRC providing critical support for several such pieces of legislation, including monitoring more than 25 bills and actively engaging in the following priorities.

## Colorado Non-Profit Security Grant Program

One of the top priorities for the JCRC this session was advocating to continue funding for the NSGP which funded vital security improvements to nine community organizations this past fall. We were relieved to learn early in the session that the push to renew this funding would not rest entirely on the JCRC and its nearly 100 coalition partners. Instead, the Colorado Department of Public Safety included the program's \$500,000 cost in its annual budget request. The budget "long bill," which included this funding, was signed by the governor on May 1. Shlomo Fried and Craig Schottenstein, co-chairs of the East Denver Orthodox Synagogue Security Team and recipients of one of the inaugural program grants, expressed their thanks to JEWISHcolorado.

*"We are ecstatic to learn that state funding for this program has been extended for another year and hope that it will remain in perpetuity. We encourage every Jewish community organization to apply since safety and security is what allows our community organizations to welcome even more participants to our programs and members into our families without needing to worry about their physical safety. We believe this is essential for everyone in the Jewish community, and we are so passionate about these programs that we are happy to work with any community organization. Please contact us with questions or concerns about this process. Finally, we want to acknowledge the vital role of JEWISHcolorado's safety and security programs—and the JCRC—for the transformative impact of their work in this space."*

## Child Care Contribution Tax Credit

Another issue of great importance to multiple JCRC member organizations was HB23-1091: Continuation of the Child Care Contribution Tax Credit. HB23-1091, sponsored by Representatives Kipp and Pugliese, extends the Child Care Contribution Tax Credit through 2027 and requires the Colorado Department of Revenue to collect additional data to develop recommendations for measuring the effectiveness of the tax credit. Governor Polis signed this bill into law on Tuesday, May 23, 2023. Jonathan Lev, Executive Director of the Boulder Jewish Community Center, had this to say:

*"We extend our heartfelt appreciation to the legislature for successfully passing the Colorado Child Care Contribution Tax Credit Bill (5c Tax Credit). The 5c Tax Credit holds immense significance in bolstering the efforts of youth-serving organizations across Colorado. Year after year, the Boulder JCC has witnessed the transformative impact of this credit, enabling us to secure vital funds for scholarships, essential facility enhancements, and overall operational support dedicated to our cherished Jay and Rose Phillips Early Childhood Center and Cherryvale Day Camps. With this tax credit as an unwavering source of inspiration, our community is motivated to contribute even more to these invaluable community programs."*



## Nursing Facility Reimbursement Rate Setting

The JCRC also advocated for the passage of HB23-1228: Nursing Facility Reimbursement Rate, sponsored by Speaker McCluskie and Representative Willford. This bill increased the reimbursement rate for nursing home facilities by 10%. This was a top priority for Shalom Park, who provided testimony in support of the bill in both the House and Senate. We also worked with the Joint Budget Committee to ensure there was funding set aside to pay for the increase. Marc Penner, CEO of Shalom Park, had this to say about the bill's anticipated impact:

*"On behalf of Shalom Park and Colorado's nursing home industry, we sincerely thank the Jewish Community Relations Council for their support of this critically important Medicaid rate bill. This increase will play a vital role in helping the Colorado nursing homes that serve a Medicaid population to meet the significant increases in operational costs that the industry experienced during and after the pandemic. This bill will allow for Shalom to continue its mission in providing the highest quality of care and services to our elders. It will strengthen our ability to fulfill the mitzvah of taking care of those who have taken care of us. We thank the JCRC for demonstrating the importance of caring for the elderly."*

As the JCRC enters its fourth decade supporting the Colorado Jewish community, we are humbled by the commitment

and tireless dedication of our 40 member organizations and 15 at-large representatives. We thank the community for sharing their struggles and goals with us. We look forward to next year's advocacy work and anticipate tackling multiple challenges including expanding the resources available to Colorado educators implementing the 2020 Holocaust and Genocide Education mandate and ensuring that more organizations are able to take advantage of nonprofit security funding. □

For more information about the JCRC, please contact Dan Leshem at [dleshem@jewishcolorado.org](mailto:dleshem@jewishcolorado.org).



# Lions of Judah Lead Women's Philanthropy

For the 28 Colorado women who joined more than 1200 women at the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) International Lion of Judah Conference in December 2022, it might be difficult to pick a single highlight from their inspirational gathering.

Was it the camaraderie, the chance to sing and dance, laugh and cry, as they celebrated 50 years of philanthropic impact made by women from around the world?

Was it the program, with powerhouse speakers focusing on women's empowerment, Federations' role in global crises like Iran and Ukraine, security and antisemitism, and mental health?

Was it the power of the collective, with women sharing a bond of philanthropic involvement in the community as they raised \$24.2 million at the event?

Or was it a genuine personal moment when Jackie Sprinco Wong joined 57 other women representing Federation communities as they received the 2022 Kipnis-Wilson/Friedland Award? This award recognizes leaders who embody the spirit and vision of Lions of Judah through a commitment to *tzedakah*, *tikkun olam*, and community service.

Instead of going to the stage, awardees stayed with their local



groups to be honored. Each group was given a single shawl with the Lion logo. The Colorado women raised it above Jackie's head, like a chuppah, and then Jackie's daughter-in-law Ashleigh Wong and her friend Diana Zeff Anderson wrapped her in the shawl as her fellow 'Lions' embraced her. There were tears and there were smiles as Jackie looked at her friends and said, simply, "Isn't this great?"

## A powerful program

International Lions of Judah is the signature women's philanthropic movement of JFNA. "This year's conference is an opportunity to celebrate this unbelievable cadre of women leaders who are touching countless lives and strengthening Jewish communities around the globe through their

collective giving," said Chair of the National Women's Philanthropy of JFNA Carolyn Gitlin. "As the influence of women in charitable giving continues to grow, I have no doubt that our 'Lions' will continue to make a transformational impact on our Jewish world."

Attendees at the three-day conference in Phoenix, Ariz., came from 80 Jewish Federations and 5 countries representing 18,000 Lions of Judah around the world. They will not soon forget the national figures who spoke at plenary and break-out sessions. Katie Couric delivered the keynote experience, revisiting the family secret she had written about in her autobiography *Going There*. Couric's mother was Jewish, something she kept hidden throughout her daughter's childhood.



For Couric, this was a moment to acknowledge and embrace her heritage, as her long-time friend Dana Keller, Board Chair of the Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford, pinned her as a new Lion of Judah.

“What would you say to your younger self?” Keller asked Couric. “Be bold, and speak up,” Couric replied to a standing ovation.

## The Colorado impact

Since Lions of Judah was founded in 1972 by Norma Kipnis-Wilson and Toby Friedland of blessed memory, Lions have collectively raised more than one billion dollars supporting flourishing Jewish communities and aiding vulnerable Jews at home, in Israel, and around the globe.

Through the years, Colorado women have played a significant role in the leadership and philanthropy of ‘Lions.’ At this

conference, Colorado was well-represented both in the size of its delegation and its presence on the program:

- Jillian Feiger, JEWISHcolorado Director of Jewish Student Connection and the Joyce Zeff Israel Study Tour, talked about her work with teens and mental health and the national BeWell program;
- Rabbi Emily Hyatt from Temple Emanuel spoke multiple times and led the call to action before each Federation broke into its community conversation;
- Stacey Aviva Flint, the JFNA Director of Jewish Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Education and Community Engagement spoke in a break-out session;
- Rose Savage Levenson spoke about BaMidbar, the only Jewish wilderness therapy program in the United States.

“I am so proud of our women and all they do,” said Roberta Witkow, Director of Women’s Philanthropy at JEWISHcolorado. “Colorado women have been and continue to be leaders at the national level in the Federation community. At the biannual conferences, ‘Lions’ make connections and find opportunities to network and learn, and that leads to national leadership roles.”

The Colorado women who attended returned home renewed, inspired, and motivated to continue their philanthropic generosity and involvement. Just stand back and watch them roar. □

*For more information about Women’s Philanthropy, please contact Roberta Witkow at [rwitkow@jewishcolorado.org](mailto:rwitkow@jewishcolorado.org).*





# Students Bring Jewish Community to Their High School

It's nearly 11:00 a.m. on the first snowy morning of the year, and Jillian Feiger is hustling across the expansive campus of Northfield High School with an eye on reaching Building Five.

Within minutes, Feiger, JEWISHcolorado's Director of Jewish Student Connection and IST, has arrived in a second-floor classroom, just in time to greet dozens of students gathering for the Northfield Jewish Student Connection (JSC) club.

Until this fall, Feiger traveled around the metro area to 10 high schools weekly to meet with teens. But now, the number of schools has risen to 11, thanks to the initiative of two Northfield students—Senior Samantha Burrows and Sophomore Hannah Kutnick, who collaborated to start the JSC club at their high school.

"I had friends who ran clubs like this at other schools," says Samantha. "I said to myself, 'Northfield is just as big as those schools. Why don't we have a Jewish Student Connection?'"

"There are quite a few Jewish students at Northfield, and I didn't know many of them," adds Hannah. "This was an opportunity to create a Jewish community at the school."

What neither of the club founders had predicted was

the overwhelming response the Northfield JSC has generated. Nearly 50 students have arrived for this Thursday morning gathering, and it's standing room only in the classroom.

"It's kind of crazy!" Samantha says. "When we started it, I did not think this many people would show up."

To be clear, not every student in the room is Jewish.

"The beauty of JSC is that we welcome everyone," says Feiger. "It's an opportunity for non-Jewish teens to show allyship with Jewish teens and educate themselves about Jewish culture and Israel. They can be part of this community without being Jewish."

"I think it's a great policy to include everyone," adds Hannah. "I wanted to create more awareness about Jewish culture and holidays, and this means that non-Jewish people can learn too."

## Joining a Jewish community

At the beginning of the Northfield JSC meeting, students line up to grab a slice of pizza. As students eat lunch, they listen to a short presentation from May Sabri and Omer Dian, Shinshinim who take a look back the news of



the week from Israel—what they call "ShinshiNews." Shinshinim help lead every JSC meeting, adding depth and breadth to the discussions.

"The Shinshinim tell us about Israel and that's important," Samantha says. "Israel is on the other side of the world, and often, we only hear about conflicts. We don't hear about daily life."

Students have a variety of experiential activities at the meetings. Already this year, they competed to build the best candy sukkah, played Rosh Hashanah trivia, and tried Hebrew slang bingo. All the activities are engaging, but not all are light-hearted.

"The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) is coming in to talk with us in a couple weeks, and that will be more serious," says Hannah. "It's important to have a good balance between the fun and serious."

Teagan, a sophomore at Northfield, is one of the non-Jewish members of the club.

"I come because we get to learn



about Jewish culture,” she says. “It’s better to learn about the way people live before you develop any prejudices.”

Nathan, a Northfield Junior, is Jewish and appreciates the chance to be part of a community. “I don’t know a lot of Jewish kids who are my age,” he says, “so this is a great chance to meet more.”

“JSC may be the first time that teens get to *choose* to be part of Jewish community,” Feiger says. “No one is telling them to come. They want to be there, they want to learn, and they want to stay for the community.”

### Making their school more inclusive

Before they started the Northfield JSC club, Hannah and Samantha were not particularly close friends. When the two teens separately started brainstorming the idea of a club, their mothers—Carla Kutnick and Jodi Burrows—connected them. Now the Northfield students participating in JSC have joined

500 individual metro area teens already involved in JSC clubs so far this year.

What are Hannah and Samantha getting back from their initiative and hard work?

“I knew Jews know about Judaism, but I didn’t know what other people knew, and I wanted to teach them the basics.” Samantha says. “My whole purpose was to get other people here to learn. That has been really rewarding.”

“It has given me a good chance to grow as a leader,” Hannah says. “I meet with leaders of other alliance clubs, and together, we are planning events to make our school culture more inclusive.” □

*Jewish Student Connection is supported by a grant from Rose Community Foundation and your generous gifts to JEWISHcolorado. For more information, please contact Jillian Feiger at [jfeiger@jewishcolorado.org](mailto:jfeiger@jewishcolorado.org).*

“JSC may be the first time that teens get to *choose* to be part of Jewish community. No one is telling them to come. They want to be there, they want to learn, and they want to stay for the community.”

*Jillian Feiger, JEWISHcolorado  
Director of Jewish Student  
Connection & IST*

# Safety Training Can Save Lives

**“If you hear gunshots and start running, how do you know you are not running toward the shooter?”**

**“If we have police officers in our school, are they trained to protect us?”**

**“If you are in a high school that has multiple buildings and there are shots fired in another building, do you stay where you are or do you run?”**

Those were just some of the questions on the minds of teenagers who attended a JEWISHcolorado Safety & Security training the first week of April.

JEWISHcolorado organized trainings on two consecutive evenings in the wake of the March 22 shooting at East High School which sent two administrators to the hospital, one with life-threatening injuries, and the Feb. 13 shooting outside East when a student, Luis Garcia, sustained injuries that led to his death.

There was standing room only at the second evening of training, as more than 100 teens representing public and private high schools from across the metro area and parents gathered to hear guidance from JEWISHcolorado’s Regional Security Advisor Phil Niedringhaus.

Niedringhaus began by giving his audience a sense of *why* they should listen to him. With 36 years of law enforcement experience, including 29 years

with the Federal Bureau of Investigation during which he worked undercover with the white supremacist hate group Aryan Nations, he speaks with well-earned authority.

“He is a commanding presence,” one parent said after the training. “His message came through loud and clear, and he brought it to a different level for us.”

Niedringhaus’s mission that evening was not to talk about *his* expertise. It was to empower his listeners to feel more confident about taking action when they were threatened.

“It doesn’t matter if something happens to you in a school, a theater, a store,” he told the group. “This training does save lives.”

## Practical guidance for survival

“Where would you go if something happened in the space you are in right now?”

With that opening question, Niedringhaus had the group’s full attention. He had introduced a theme that would resonate throughout the evening—always be aware of your surroundings. For more than an hour, he talked straight talk—no jargon, no sugar-coating his message. He gave the teens and parents practical strategies for preventing and surviving a mass attack.

He reminded students that, despite the recent focus in Colorado on

school shootings, they are more exposed to danger away from school than in school and that there are other ways to threaten people besides using a gun. He also asked the students to take responsibility for the safety of their community by using a tool like Safe2Tell, an anonymous way to report information about safety concerns.

“In 75% of school shootings, other students knew something might happen before it happened,” he said. “If you know something, you have to say something.”

Throughout the evening, Niedringhaus emphasized the need for people to protect themselves in a threatening situation—to act, rather than to sit back and do nothing.

For anyone in the room who might doubt that violence could ever touch them, he listed a series of tragedies, from the Virginia Tech shooter who killed 32 people in 2007 to the ISIS terrorist who drove a truck down a New York bike path killing eight people in 2017 to the Tree of Life Synagogue Shooting in 2018 where 11 died.

Niedringhaus assured his audience that being scared in a life and death encounter is normal, but if they remember their training, they would be able to rise above their fear and “commit to action.” The three action points he emphasized—Run, Hide, Fight—gained national attention after they were used by Michigan State University in a message to





students in February 2023, when an active shooter killed three students on campus.

“Run away as fast as you can, if there is no place to run, barricade yourself, and finally fight to survive,” he told his audience. “Fighting is a team sport. Use weapons of opportunity. A chair can be your weapon.”

## How training saves lives

The training at JEWISHcolorado was just the latest in a series of safety and security efforts that began in 2019 when JEWISHcolorado launched the Regional Safety & Security Initiative in partnership with the Secure Community Network (SCN), the Rose Community Foundation, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), and the Jay and Rose Phillips Family Foundation. SCN is the official safety and security organization of the Jewish community in North America.

As a representative of SCN at JEWISHcolorado, Niedringhaus

provides safety services and trainings to nonprofits and religious organizations of any denomination, including security advice and consultation, safety and security training, and information sharing based in SCN’s national headquarters. These services are available 24/7, free of charge to all nonprofit and faith organizations.

As an example of how training can save lives, Niedringhaus pointed to the Colleyville, Texas, synagogue where a gunman took four hostages in January 2022. The hostages escaped unharmed after fighting back, using training they had received from multiple organizations, including SCN.

While parents might wish that their high schoolers should not have to worry about dying during the school day or spend an evening learning how to survive a mass casualty event, the students’ questions indicated that they understand this is the world they

live in. And in that regard, parents may be learning from their children.

“How sad and frightening it is to have to think about our kids in this situation,” one parent said as they left. “We want our kids to be able to work hard and focus in school, and instead, they live with this fear. But I think it’s so important that they learn to take care of themselves from different sources. The more they hear it, the more it sticks.” □

*For more information about the JEWISHcolorado Regional & Security Initiative or to schedule a training, site assessment, or walk-through of your facility, please contact Phil Niedringhaus at [pniedringhaus@securecommunitynetwork.org](mailto:pniedringhaus@securecommunitynetwork.org). To learn how you can provide philanthropic support for this important work, contact Renée Rockford at [rockford@jewishcolorado.org](mailto:rockford@jewishcolorado.org).*

# PJ Library JEWISHcolorado— It's More Than Books in the Mail!

In Aurora, Colo., Ilyse Bekerman's two young daughters love getting their PJ Library books in the mail—one every month for each child. The only issue at the Bekerman house? The books for each girl do not always arrive on the same day of the month which can occasionally lead to a brief case of "PJ Library envy."

Bekerman subscribed to PJ Library when her first child was born. Now that her older daughter will be turning five and her younger will be three years old, the monthly books have added up to hundreds on her shelves—and Bekerman is just fine with that.

"The books teach young children good Jewish values long before they can read," Bekerman says. "They offer discussion points and connect us to Jewish holidays. They support the next generation and help them see that being Jewish is fun."

Drive 170 miles northwest from the Bekermans' house to the mountain town of Steamboat Springs, Colo., and you will find more shelves of PJ Library books at Daniella Priebatsch Place's home. She has two young sons, similar in age to Ilyse's daughters. The family moved from the East Coast to Steamboat Springs two years ago, and the practice of receiving PJ Library books moved with them.

"Parents are busy especially

around holidays like Hanukkah and Passover," Place says. "It may be on your list to buy an age-appropriate book for each child, but sometimes it's nice when it just shows up at your door."

A program of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, PJ Library, which sends books to children from birth to age 12, is made possible through partnerships with philanthropists and the support of local Jewish organizations like JEWISHcolorado. There are 4,000 children under the age of eight receiving PJ Library books in Colorado and an additional 625 children ages 9-12 receiving PJ Our Way chapter books. Last year, with the support of JEWISHcolorado, Colorado children received a total of 55,500 books.

"The subscriptions to PJ Library are free thanks to the Harold Grinspoon Foundation and JEWISHcolorado," says Bethany Friedlander, PJ Library JEWISHcolorado Manager. "But without the local support from JEWISHcolorado, we could not sustain this program."

That is especially true since PJ Library JEWISHcolorado has expanded its mission to include "Family Connectors" who are recruited and supported by Friedlander. Whether in Aurora or in Steamboat Springs, Sterling or Westminster, or anywhere in Colorado, Family Connectors are

taking the PJ Library book program one step further by creating Jewish community through activities for young families who come together at informal but meaningful gatherings.

"PJ Library JEWISHcolorado recognizes that we need to engage families not just through books but also through social opportunities," says Friedlander. "This program began before the pandemic, but especially after COVID, we learned how important it is to be physically with other people, celebrating ideas and concepts Jewishly."

## A small town Family Connector

Before they moved from Boston, the Place family knew that their mountain town Jewish community would be small, but they felt reassured that it existed because of Har Mishpacha, the Jewish congregation of Steamboat Springs. Now that Rabbi Kolby Morris-Dahary, the first full-time rabbi at Har Mishpacha, has arrived, Daniella Place uses the words "exciting" and "momentum" to describe the mood within the Steamboat Springs Jewish community.

Place is contributing to that momentum as a Family Connector. In this role, she works at a grassroots level to find families raising young Jewish children



“It may be on your list to buy an age-appropriate book for each child, but sometimes it’s nice when it just shows up at your door.”

*Daniella Priebatsch Place*



*Ilyse Bekerman and her two daughters*

and arrange for them to get together, socialize, and participate in welcoming and inclusive neighborhood-based programming.

Place likes the PJ Library JEWISHcolorado Family Connector program because it motivates the community to create social and educational programming for children in a town where there is no formal Hebrew school for younger children.

“It’s nice to know that there are national and Colorado resources that focus on small towns,” she says. “I know if I go to Denver, there would be Jewish events I could attend, but to have additional focus on smaller towns is really helpful.”

Place is so enthusiastic about her family’s new life in Steamboat Springs, she is recruiting. “It’s a Jewish start-up,” she laughs. “Come and check it out!”

## An urban Family Connector

Three years ago, Ilyse Bekerman signed up to serve as a Family Connector in the Denver suburb of Aurora for what she describes as “selfish” reasons.

“It was me building my own little community because I could meet parents and Jewish children who live close to us,” she says. “I wanted my children to be around other Jewish families raising children Jewishly.”

When she first started as a Family Connector, PJ Library JEWISHcolorado managers gave her a list of families who lived in her neighborhood, and she would plan events like visits to a local park for playdates and bagels.

Over time, she has found that her role has evolved. Now, she plans events for Jewish families she knows, and she asks them to bring

another family with them when they come.

“I feel like more people know about PJ Library than did five years ago,” she says. “When I first started, people thought it was too good to be true. They would say, ‘I’m getting these books for free? What’s the catch?’ Now, it’s rare that I meet someone who has not heard of PJ Library, so we are getting the word out.”

As a pre-school teacher at Hebrew Educational Alliance, Bekerman is right at home with the activities suggested by PJ Library JEWISHcolorado.

“I don’t remember having anything like this when I was younger,” she says. “The pay-off is that my kids love holidays, love Shabbat, and love PJ Library JEWISHcolorado events.” □

*For more information about PJ Library, please contact Bethany Friedlander at [bfriedlander@jewishcolorado.org](mailto:bfriedlander@jewishcolorado.org).*

# Israel & Overseas Center Strengthens Bonds With Israel

On Sunday, May 7, 2023, JEWISHcolorado convened nearly 2,000 members and allies of the Jewish community at Lowry's Great Lawn Park for "Celebrate Israel," Colorado's largest festival dedicated to the people, culture, and land of Israel.

Event Co-chairs Josh Yeddis and Dana Friedman greeted the crowd with a reminder of the robust and long-lasting connections between American Jews and Israel as Israel celebrated 75 years of existence.

Everyone shared a sense of joy in the gathering of community for one purpose—to reinforce and strengthen the bonds to a country many consider "a home away from home."

Celebrate Israel is just one of the ways that JEWISHcolorado's Israel & Overseas Center (I&OC) reinforces bonds between Colorado and Israel. In the past year, the I&OC increased its impact in the community through 25,000 engagements with a variety of new and recurring programs.

## I&OC travel programs Joyce Zeff Israel Study Tour (IST)

For more than 50 years, the community-based IST trip has been delivering experiences to high



school students that have long-lasting impact. For the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic, this summer's trip spent several days in Poland, offering perspective and context before the teens traveled to Israel.

## G2

In partnership with The Jewish Agency, JEWISHcolorado launched a local component of the G2 program, featuring a year of learning with five grandparent/grandchild pairs that culminated in a trip to Israel.

## YAD/Ramat HaNegev Exchange (formerly 248)

During the first year of the Israel & Overseas Center, JEWISHcolorado launched a Young Adult exchange program

with our partnership region of Ramat HaNegev. This year, this program has helped to forge an even stronger partnership with the communities in the region by facilitating an exchange between young adults in the two countries that has produced clearer understanding between peoples, deeper connections with their own Jewish identities, stronger advocacy for Jewish life, and increased engagement in their Jewish communities.

## I&OC partnerships ART

Hosted by the Denver Jewish Day School community, 14 students traveled from Israel in April to meet with their American counterparts in Denver and Boulder.



## Delegation visits

Eran Doron, the mayor of Ramat HaNegev, visited Colorado twice in the past year. He met with community members, donors, a reunion of the group that decided on the partnership in Ramat HaNegev, public officials including the mayor of Boulder, and with the Metro Denver Chamber of Commerce.

## I&OC conversation, communication, and cultural exchange

### Shaliach & Shinshinim

The Shaliach and Shinshinim programs, run in partnership with The Jewish Agency, build bridges between Israeli and Jewish communities. The programs create ongoing dialogue between the two peoples to strengthen Jewish family ties and to build the foundation for a secure Jewish future.

## Courageous Conversations

We know that good leadership is built and strengthened through relationships with colleagues and with the broader community that we serve. Through this program, which features speakers and faculty from the Shalom Hartman Institute, we bring together community leaders to address the critical questions and most enduring adaptive challenges that we face at this once-in-a-generation moment.

## Israel & Overseas Center Newsletter and JEWISHcolorado Newsletter

In both these newsletters, JEWISHcolorado publishes articles that focus on the work of the I&OC, all things Israel,

and connections between Colorado and Israel.

## I&OC cultural events

Through multiple community events, the I&OC offers connecting points for people to partake in Jewish life and culture. Some of the events planned and hosted by the I&OC include:

- Israeli celebrations and commemorations with our Shaliach;
- Dugri Rap Duo event designed to unite young Jews/Arabs around a new Israeli-Palestinian narrative;
- Culinary Fundraiser with Israeli food and drink and the film *In Search of Israeli Cuisine*;
- Celebrate Israel Walk and Festival. □



# Get To Know Nelly Ben Tal, the New Shlichah

*In August, Nelly Ben Tal arrived in Denver to assume the position of JEWISHcolorado's Shlichah. A couple of weeks after she settled in, we spoke with her about her family, the transition to life in Colorado, and her goals in her new role.*

## **You have not been in Denver very long. How are you settling in?**

Well, last night everyone slept through the night for the first time, so today is a good day!

I have twins, Libby and Rom, who are five years old and a nine-year-old daughter Ella. And of course, my husband Rotem.

## **This is a significant move and life change for you, but even more so with children.**

We wanted our children to be the first to know about our plans—we did not want them to hear about it from other people. We took everyone for a picnic lunch with traditional food and said, “We want to share something with you.” Initially, our little ones were just puzzled, but Ella was absolutely thrilled.

As it sank in, Ella started worrying about leaving her friends in Israel. She wanted to know if she could get together with them on weekends! Within two weeks, she came to us and asked if she could have private English lessons, so she was preparing herself to arrive

with confidence. All three of our children will be at Denver Jewish Day School, Ella in grade four and the twins in Pre-Kindergarten.

## **What did your husband think about this major move?**

My husband really liked the idea of going on this journey as a family. He is adventurous, so he has been encouraging me to take this position for several years. In Israel, he has a company involved in solar energy. In fact, he holds a patent for an automated cleaning system for solar panels, so he is an innovator and an entrepreneur as well.

## **How did you initially get interested in becoming an Israeli emissary, a Shlichah?**

Eran Doron, the mayor of Ramat HaNegev, suggested that I would be a good candidate for this position after I served in the community and culture department at the Ramat HaNegev Council a few years ago. The application through the Jewish Agency for Israel is intense with many steps. At every stage, you learn more about the role and the expectations. You have many chances to assess whether you are up to the challenge, but with each step of the application, you want the position more and more!

## **What intrigued you about this new position?**

For the past 12 years, I have been

working as an organizational consultant in technology, finance, and industry. I also served as the community manager in Ramat HaNegev, and I was the founder of a nonprofit organization. With each job, I have thought about what I am good at and what I like to do. I discovered that I like to create initiatives that relate to people and peoplehood. I wanted to achieve something with greater meaning along with broadening my organizational reach.

When I became a mother, I started thinking about my different identities—as an Israeli, a Jew, a mother, and a kibbutznik—and I asked myself about my values in each role and how I could share those values with my children. Becoming a Shlichah was a chance to do something greater both in my personal life and my work.

## **You mentioned that you are a kibbutznik. Where is your home in Israel?**

I grew up in Hadera, I spent time in London after my army service, I went to college in Eilat, and then I moved to Tel Aviv. My family visited Ramat HaNegev frequently because my husband's grandparents were founders of Kibbutz Mashabei Sadeh in 1947, so we have longstanding family ties there.

Every time I would go to visit, I felt that was the right place for me.



“I would like to serve as a two-way bridge between communities in Israel and communities in Colorado.”

*Nelly Ben Tal*  
*JEWISHcolorado Shlichah*



The Negev opens your heart, you breathe differently, and the rhythm of life slows. When Ella was two years old, I told my husband I wanted to move there, and he is always up for a challenge. It is a wonderful place to raise independent children.

**JEWISHcolorado and Ramat HaNegev have had long-lasting connections.**

The partnership between JEWISHcolorado and Ramat HaNegev is very important. We are coming up on 25 years together, a major milestone. Colorado's generosity has had a huge impact on settlements within Ramat HaNegev. We have issues in common—agriculture, water supply, sun and solar energy. We can help each other, learn from each other, and contribute to each other.

**In some ways, you may find Colorado to be similar to your home in Israel and in some ways, very different.**

My husband first came to Colorado in 2019 on a young adult mission and he felt welcome and safe, and he loved the beautiful parts of the state. I came with my husband for the first time in May and discovered that Colorado is very dry! Since we have moved here, the community has been very generous and kind.

**In this new role, you will be here for at least two years. It may be hard to talk about specific initiatives and goals, but in general, how will you measure success over time?**

I would like to serve as a two-way bridge between communities in Israel and communities in Colorado. I would like to tell the story of Israel here in Colorado, both my

personal experience as well as the experiences of others. With every encounter here, I promise I will share myself and my values.

While I am teaching, I hope to be learning. I want to learn about Jewish peoplehood in the U.S. What are their values? What kind of engagement do they have with Israel and the world Jewish community? These conversations will create meaningful connections, open minds, and help people understand and care about each other better. I would like my years in Colorado to be something that will impact me, so that I return to Israel a different person.

I will know that I was successful when I have reached new communities throughout Colorado that were not previously aware of or exposed to the great work of JEWISHcolorado. □

*You can contact Nelly Ben Tal at [nbental@jewishcolorado.org](mailto:nbental@jewishcolorado.org).*

# Meet Our New Shinshinim

If you have attended a JEWISHcolorado event in the past year, you may very likely have encountered one of JEWISHcolorado's Shinshinim, four young Israelis who spent the past year sharing their lives, knowledge, and culture with Coloradans.

In December, students who attended a meeting of the new Jewish Student Connection Club at Northfield High School learned about political developments in Israel—from the Shinshinim.

In April, as JEWISHcolorado convened the community for Yom HaZikaron, a solemn crowd listened to stories of grief for those who had fallen defending Israel—told by the Shinshinim.

In May, a crowd of nearly 2,000 people who gathered at the “Celebrate Israel @ 75” event waited to begin their march to support Israel until the final countdown—led by the Shinshinim.

Shinshinim is a Hebrew acronym for Shnat Sherut or “year of service.” For a full year, these young people, all recent high school graduates who delayed mandatory service in the Israel Defense Forces, serve diaspora communities around the world. They spend a year immersed in the local Jewish community, educating youth about Israeli society and culture, current affairs, and Jewish traditions.

“By connecting Colorado with communities in Israel, the Shinshinim enrich our lives every day,” says JEWISHcolorado President & CEO Renée Rockford. “The number of Shinshinim serving around the world has quadrupled in the past decade, and that is powerful testimony to the impact of these cultural ambassadors who become like family wherever they go.”

This summer, JEWISHcolorado said farewell to its ninth cohort of Shinshinim: Adaya Koren, May Sabri, Omer Dian, and Ram Shraiber.

In August, JEWISHcolorado welcomes its tenth group of Shinshinim. They bring with them new interests and passions and above all, a willingness to create a bridge to Israel.

## Welcome to the new Shinshinim

Shinshinim are chosen from more than a thousand candidates after a lengthy and thorough selection process. The emissary program attracts participants from all backgrounds and sectors of Israeli society. Meet the 2023-2024 JEWISHcolorado Shinshinim:

### Liron Amar

comes to Denver from Midreshet Ben-Gurion, a small settlement and educational center in the Negev. He has two older sisters



and one younger sister. He attended a high school that focuses on environmental education, where he majored in environmental studies, physics, and biology. Liron's hobbies include swimming (he has swum competitively), hiking, traveling, and hanging out with his friends.

### Afek Barda

lives in Kiryat Malachi (“City of Angels”), a small city in the Southern District of Israel



which was named in honor of supporters from the Jewish community in Los Angeles. He is the youngest of three brothers. His majors in school are physics and electrical engineering. Afek runs his scouting tribe “Shalhevet” and says it is “basically my entire life.” His hobbies include playing computer games and going to the beach with his friends.

### Talia Shalom,

18, lives in the small community of Be'er Milka which is located in the central Negev Desert within the Ramat HaNegev Regional Council. Her parents were some of the original settlers in 2006. She has four brothers, and the family runs a business producing wine and olive oil.





“ By connecting Colorado with communities in Israel, the Shinshinim enrich our lives every day. ”

*Renée Rockford  
JEWISHcolorado  
President & CEO*



Talia's hobbies include sports (especially weightlifting), reading (historical fiction is a favorite), crocheting, and hanging out with her friends.

**Roni Zinger, 18,** lives in Ganei Tikva, an area near Tel Aviv known for its high standard of living and quality education. Roni attended the town's one high school, where she majored in diplomacy and social sciences. She is from a family of five, with a 15-year-old brother and 10-year-old sister. Roni participates in scouts in Israel where she supervises fifth grade counselors. Her hobbies include hanging out with friends, travel, watching movies, and going to the beach.



## Shinshinim contributions

The Shinshinim, who live with host families, keep extraordinarily busy during their months of service. By the time they left for their homes in Israel, the 2022-2023 JEWISHcolorado Shinshinim had engaged in 34,000 interactions with participants in collaboration with 25 partner organizations including Hillels, religious schools, day schools, youth groups, preschools, and camps. They traveled around Colorado—from Boulder to Colorado Springs, from Denver to Aspen.

The Shinshinim Program has operated for more than 20 years and sends some 200 Israeli teens to Jewish communities in North America, South Africa, and Europe. It is a partnership between JEWISHcolorado and

the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI). At the national level, it is also supported, in part, by the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) and Keren Hayesod – United Israel Appeal. The larger Jewish Agency delegation of 2,000 emissaries of different ages and backgrounds work around the world at summer camps, university campuses, youth movements, synagogues, JCCs, and Federations.

Locally, the program is run as part of JEWISHcolorado's Israel & Overseas Center, an initiative that brings comprehensive and coordinated support for connections between Colorado and the global Jewish world. □

*For more information about the Shinshinim, please contact Michelle Schwartz at [mschwartz@jewishcolorado.org](mailto:mschwartz@jewishcolorado.org).*

# Real Estate Networkers Hear From the Governor and Travel to LA

**O**verheard at Safta on the evening of the Real Estate & Construction Network (RECN) event on January 12:

*"I would give you my card, but I ran out about 20 minutes ago."*

That sums up the kind of networking night had by all at the very successful "New Year, New Perspectives: An Evening of Ideation and Collaboration." Nearly 200 members of Colorado's real estate and construction industry packed the trendy restaurant Safta which had closed its doors to the public to host this special event.

Was it the menu (delicious and Kosher) or the venue (gracious and inviting) that made this evening so successful? Was it an appearance by Governor Jared Polis, the chance to shake his hand and

hear his thoughts about Colorado economic issues in 2023? Was it the opportunity to join roundtable discussions on hot industry topics led by subject matter experts? Was it the time spent initiating new deals or closing them with a handshake? Was it the joy of seeing old friends and making new ones?

The answer? It was all of the above that kept business cards flying and energy high long after the event had officially ended. It's hard to believe that JEWISHcolorado just launched RECN during fall of 2022. Already, the organization is making a name for itself as a forward-looking influencer in the Colorado real estate landscape. Just ask the governor.

"I was really excited to see that there is a JEWISHcolorado Real Estate and Construction Network," Polis told the crowd. "And the

## 2024 REAL ESTATE & CONSTRUCTION NETWORK TRIP

April 1-3, 2024

Las Vegas

Wynn Las Vegas

Exclusive tours of real estate projects

Opportunities to network with Jewish Nevada

really remarkable thing is that it's not just five people around the table. This is a real group here."

## The governor looks into the future

In addressing the crowd, Gov. Polis focused his remarks on several Colorado economic factors including the availability of housing and cost of living in the state.

"We are really trying to lean into removing some of the barriers to home construction, reducing red tape, allowing houses of all types to be built for people of all income levels," he said. "How do we make housing around transit-oriented communities and walkable commercial areas? We all care about reducing traffic because less traffic means cleaner air and less time that our residents are stuck in cars and away from wonderful networking events like this. With your help, we will work



Governor Jared Polis





on all these things to make sure Colorado is well prepared for future success.”

After the governor spoke, six subject matter experts had volunteered their time to lead optional 20-minute roundtable discussions on timely topics including:

- Tax Assessments and Valuations;
- Affordable Housing;
- Rooftop/Urban Farming;
- Construction Defect Issues;
- ESG;
- Post-Covid Office Market.

Dropping by each table, attendees gained new insights and answers to their questions. When the evening ended, the conversation continued even as Safta staff cleared the tables. Without a doubt, many RECN members went home with a note to self: “Bring more business cards to the next JEWISHcolorado RECN event.”

## Los Angeles trip

RECN followed up on its very successful Safta event with a trip for local real estate professionals to Los Angeles where participants could network with the decades-old Real Estate and Construction Network of the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles.

The trip included a behind-the-scenes tour of Griffith Observatory and a tour of Dodger Stadium with Barbara Levin, the architect behind historic renovations at the stadium. Colorado visitors also toured the latest Frank Gehry mega-project, the Grand LA complex, including the Conrad Los Angeles hotel.

The two federations’ Real Estate and Construction networks got together for a joint cocktail hour and a shared breakfast.

“The trip was incredible!” said Alex Reber, a Broker with Madison & Company Properties LLC.

“Being able to network with the LA Federation was a great opportunity to meet new people, and I am excited about future networking opportunities between the two federations.”

Participants in RECN events are asked to make a philanthropic gift to support the work of JEWISHcolorado both locally and in communities around the world. “While industry group philanthropy is not new, members of the Real Estate group see the incredible access and networking value that this provides,” said Mark Sidell, chair of the Real Estate group. “It is also a way to give back to the community that fuels the industry, so it is a win-win.” □

*For more information about RECN, please contact Sheila Abrahamsson at [sabrahamsson@jewishcolorado.org](mailto:sabrahamsson@jewishcolorado.org).*

# Volunteering With Compassion for the Dignity of Others

It was December 2022, and Jami Amador was going through a tough time. Her husband had lost his job at the beginning of the month, money was tight, and the family had two little boys under the age of five to feed, clothe, and care for.

When Jami made a regular visit to Hope House, a nonprofit that offers free self-sufficiency programs to young mothers ages 15 to 25, she was surprised and delighted to receive a distinctive blue and black Dignity Grows™ tote bag filled with products she could use for herself and her whole family—deodorant, toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, shampoo, wipes, and menstrual pads.

“At that point, we didn’t have any spare money for hygienic stuff,” Jami recalls. “Prices are rising all the time, and you don’t realize

how much you spend on these things until you don’t have the money to buy them.”

By January 2023, Jami had emptied the tote. “There is endless need,” she says. “I could use another one!”

Thanks to the devotion of a group of caring JEWISHcolorado volunteers, Jami can look forward to receiving another tote, compliments of Dignity Grows™, a national 501(c)(3) founded in 2019 by the Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford in Hartford, Conn. Dignity Grows™ takes a hands-on approach to addressing “period poverty”—inadequate access to menstrual hygiene products, including but not limited to sanitary products.

On a March Sunday morning in Denver, more than 20 women and one man gathered at JEWISHcolorado where a table

was loaded with bins of hygienic products. By the end of the morning, more than 200 empty totes would be filled, each with a month’s supply of essential menstrual and hygiene products, packed by volunteers who all have their own reasons for helping women and families they may never meet.

## Why volunteer?

Even before the group of volunteers arrived, Cindy Altberger, the JEWISHcolorado Dignity Grows™ Committee Chair, was buzzing around the space setting up for the day. Altberger had become involved through JEWISHcolorado Women’s Philanthropy, but, she said, “It’s become so much more to me.

“The need is so great because people are out of work and finances are difficult for everyone. I also think period poverty is starting to get the momentum that it needs and deserves.”

In her remarks introducing herself and the project, Altberger tied Dignity Grows™ volunteer efforts back to Judaism.

“Dignity Grows™ embodies the Jewish values of *tikkun olam*, repairing the world, and *tzedakah*, charity and justice, by bringing those values into the community at large,” she said. “We can’t help everyone, but everyone can help someone.”







As the volunteers made their way around the tables, filling blue totes one by one, they socialized, connecting with old friends and meeting new ones, often talking about what had brought them there that morning.

For Michelle Striker, volunteering for Dignity Grows™ was a birthday gift from her mother, three cousins, and two friends. “I said, ‘Instead of going out for dinner to celebrate, let’s go volunteer,’” Striker said. “The fact that people who menstruate don’t have access to the products they need makes me sad. To do something to help them—on my birthday, with my family and friends—is meaningful to me.”

## Why donate?

The 200 totes filled by the volunteers on this Sunday morning were delivered to Jewish Family Service (JFS) where they will be distributed to anyone who needs

in them in a private and dignified manner. Lisa Soicher, Jewish Community Liaison at JFS, spoke to the volunteers at the packing party about the increase in community need that JFS is seeing. JFS is serving three times the number of clients needing food assistance than they were helping before the pandemic. At one point, a day when 100 families visited the Weinberg Food Pantry seemed like a lot. Now, JFS is setting new records each week, with 165 families coming through on a recent day.

“We continue to send the message that personal hygiene is just as essential to our well-being as food,” Soicher said. “With Dignity Grows™, we ensure that clients will not have to choose between buying gas to get to work and essentials like period and hygiene products.”

Michelle Striker, who serves on the Dignity Grows™ committee,

ended the morning with an appeal for help. Because Dignity Grows™ buys in bulk and receives a deep discount, it does not take a large donation to make a difference. For as little as \$10, she told the group, they could provide someone in need with a month’s supply of hygiene and menstrual products—products that would cost \$40 if they were bought at a store.

The donors and the recipients may never meet, but if they did, Jami Amador knows what she would say.

“I would thank them because they are blessing a family that is experiencing a need,” she said. It’s just so good to have that ‘clean feeling.’” □

*For more information about Dignity Grows, please contact Jill Katchen at [jkatchen@jewishcolorado.org](mailto:jkatchen@jewishcolorado.org).*

# Teaching the Next Generation the Meaning of Philanthropy

When Ryan Sherr turned 21, her grandmother, Vicki Agron, gave her

two options for a birthday gift. Vicki would give her \$2,500 in cash or she would set up a Donor Advised Fund (DAF) with JEWISHcolorado for \$5,000.



Ryan Sherr

“She said to me, ‘I don’t care what you choose,’ but it was not a hard choice,” Ryan recalls. “Having money as a college student is always good, but with a Donor Advised Fund I realized I could make a difference and have a long-lasting impact.”

From the time she made her choice, Ryan started thinking about the first charitable gift she would make from her DAF. Then, during the second week of August, when the full scope of the disaster on Maui became clear, Ryan immediately knew where her first gift would go.

“My grandfather passed away about six months ago,” she says. “He loved Lahaina—he even had a tattoo of the famous banyan tree—so helping Lahaina recover and rebuild is an important cause to me.”

For Vicki Agron, this means Ryan’s

birthday gift will accomplish exactly what she had in mind when she set up a DAF for each of her grandchildren.

“I want to give my grandchildren the experience of giving,” Agron says. “I want them to be able to practice being a philanthropist, and I am very proud of the choices they make.”

## A new generation of giving

Ryan was not the first of Vicki Agron’s grandchildren to receive a DAF for a milestone event. Vicki started the practice with two younger granddaughters, Dylan and Hayden, at the time of their bat mitzvahs. But she imposed a few stipulations.

“I told them that every gift needed to be at least \$180 because I did not want them to nickel and dime the fund,” she says. “I explained the meaning of the number 18. And I promised them that every gift they made to a Jewish organization, I would match in their honor.”

Then, Vicki sat back and watched.



Dylan Agron



Hayden Agron

On a family trip to Israel and Africa with the girls, she observed one granddaughter follow her lead and make a gift to Shalva, a nonprofit in the heart of Jerusalem that supports persons with disabilities. In Africa, her teenage granddaughters played lacrosse with girls who had no shoes or uniforms, so the family made a donation to support young African players.

“That’s just the response I am looking for,” Vicki says. “All my grandchildren are caring, compassionate people who have found giving to be empowering.”

Vicki is a first-generation philanthropist. Her devotion to giving began when she was a young wife and mother who converted to Judaism while living in Denver.

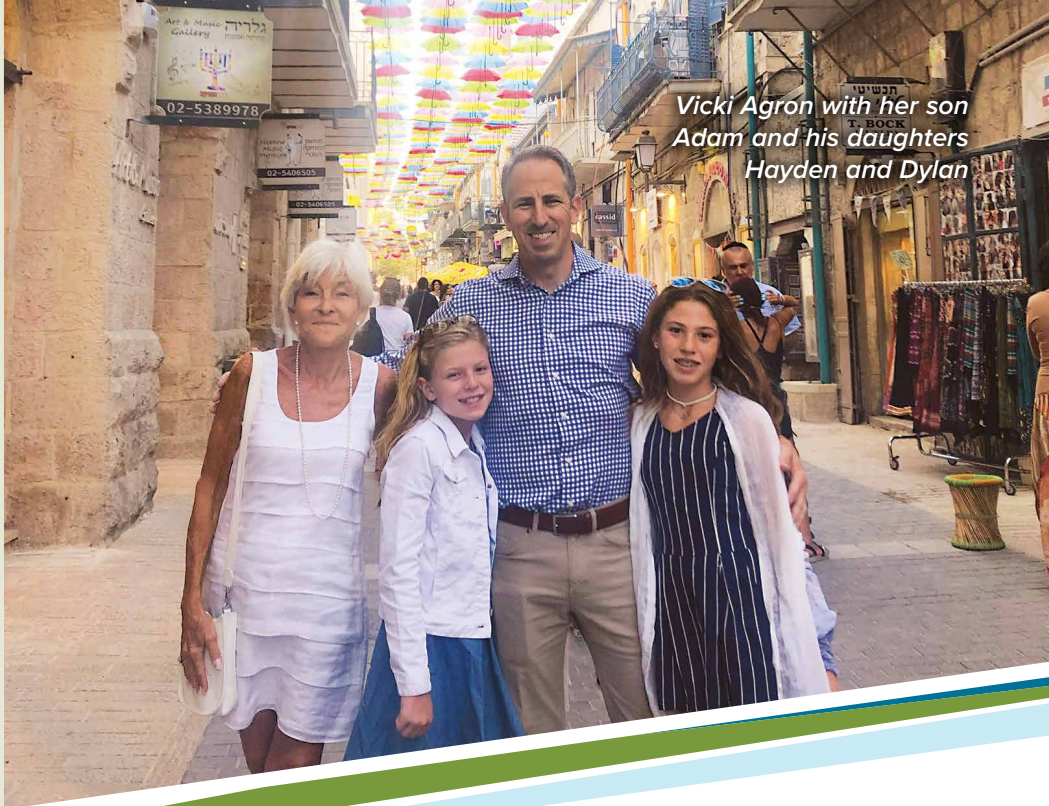
“Everything I learned about what it means to be Jewish, I learned from the Women’s Philanthropy group at what is now JEWISHcolorado,” she says. “I went on to set up a Lion of Judah endowment in appreciation for what this community gave to me and how accepting they were of me.”

For 42 years, Vicki served as a Jewish communal professional, spending 30 years at Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA). She was the Senior Vice-President for Financial Resources Development at JFNA when she



“Everything I learned about what it means to be Jewish, I learned from the Women’s Philanthropy group at what is now JEWISHcolorado.”

*Vicki Agron*



*Vicki Agron with her son Adam and his daughters Hayden and Dylan*

left to start her own consulting firm. For the past 15 years, much of her time has been spent with Jewish families who want to bring their children into a family foundation and help them discover what she calls the “joy of giving” which, she believes, is a way to “bind families together in a positive way.”

Her own family sets an example for her clients. “My grandmother has done a lot with all of us to help establish our core values,” Ryan says. “She loves to see her grandchildren developing in line with the things that are important to her. She has so much love for us and teaching us how to give is a reflection of her love.”

## How to set up a DAF

Creating a DAF through JEWISHcolorado allows donors

to make a charitable contribution to JEWISHcolorado, receive an immediate tax deduction, and then recommend grants from the fund to qualifying Jewish or non-Jewish organizations. Getting started is easy—just make a deposit of at least \$10,000 (or as low as \$5,000 if the DAF is set up by a parent or grandparent for a young person) using cash or appreciated assets.

JEWISHcolorado enables donors and community partners with a DAF to select from a variety of asset allocations, flexibility that is highly unusual among communal nonprofits. Some donors and agency partners select an asset allocation portfolio developed by the JEWISHcolorado investment committee. Others select customized allocations from among multiple preset allocation

sleeves. To make distributions, DAF holders can access their accounts conveniently online.

“A JEWISHcolorado DAF offers ways to provide a broad base of financial support for the Jewish and broader community,” says JEWISHcolorado President & CEO Renée Rockford. “For families, it provides multi-generational opportunities for education about philanthropy. No matter your investment strategy, a DAF offers strategic philanthropic options with transparency and flexibility.”

A DAF at JEWISHcolorado is built on an investment platform managed by the JEWISHcolorado Investment Committee and its independent investment advisor partner, Syntrinsic Investment Counsel. □

*For more information about opening a Donor Advised Fund, please contact Jen Kraft at [jkraft@jewishcolorado.org](mailto:jkraft@jewishcolorado.org).*

# Impact Investing Offers Opportunity To ‘Do Well by Doing Good’

**A**s part of its core mission, JEWISHcolorado serves as a philanthropic home for the community in Colorado—investing and protecting Jewish communal assets. The Jewish Community Foundation provides a range of options for stakeholders with diverse financial objectives. For stakeholders whose objectives include creating meaningful societal impact, JEWISHcolorado offers the Impact Capital Fund.

Impact investing uses investment capital to generate beneficial social or environmental effects in addition to financial gains.

“Impact investing may not be for everyone,” says Ben Valore-Caplan, Co-President of Syntrinsic, JEWISHcolorado’s investment partner. “But JEWISHcolorado recognizes that impact investing may resonate with donors and agency partners who are looking for more creative ways to activate their capital, engage the next generation, and leverage their philanthropy in new ways.”

To that end, the JEWISHcolorado Impact Capital Fund allocates capital to underserved people in Colorado, the U.S., and Israel with investments that focus on job training and creation, as well as lending to support small businesses, affordable housing,

and economic development. The impact of this kind of investment can only be told in the stories of real people—whether they are small business owners in Israel or moderate-income renters in Denver.

## Ogen Social Loan Fund

To understand the impact of an investment in the Ogen Social Loan Fund in Israel, you must start in a small falafel shop in Jerusalem owned by two Israeli brothers. They had run the shop for 15 years successfully, employing a small staff, including Arab Israelis. Then, COVID hit, and their customers vanished. In a perfect storm of crises, some of their most important equipment started to fail. They needed to invest in the business to continue.

They approached two banks for a loan and both times were turned down. It seemed as if they would lose the business, until they consulted with a business advisor who sent them to Ogen Social Loan Fund.

Ogen began decades ago as a nonprofit social lending enterprise supported by donations that were deployed to help new immigrants from Ethiopia and the Soviet Union start businesses despite their lack of credit history and collateral. In early 2020, amid

COVID closures, Ogen launched the Social Loan Fund with \$43 million in start-up capital, funded by donors and impact investors in Israel and around the world. The fund provides accessible low-interest loans to micro and small businesses as well as nonprofit organizations.

“We believe in growing the economy from the bottom up and thereby creating jobs,” says Eldan Kaye, Vice-President for Development and Partnerships at Ogen. “We work with every race, religion, gender—we don’t care. We are about creating opportunities.”

Ogen gave the falafel shop a 200,000 shekel loan, roughly \$70,000. With it, the brothers renovated, created a delivery-based business during COVID, replaced equipment, added air conditioning, and expanded. In the two years since the loan, the business has doubled in profitability, and seven families that would have become unemployed without Ogen are working harder than ever.

“They pay their loan on time, and they have a new lease on life,” Kaye says. “Investing in Ogen, you can have tremendous impact on people’s lives at the same time you are part of something you can be proud of. You can do well by doing good.”





## CHAI Debt Fund

Ed Briscoe traces his commitment to affordable housing to a high school summer volunteer trip in New Orleans.

“I remember standing and looking at the Superdome and the Hyatt, and in the foreground, I was looking at public housing,” he says. “The disparity between seeing those symbols of wealth and not very far away seeing people living in poor conditions struck me as wrong. This is America, and it did not make sense.”

Fast forward several decades and Briscoe has found a way to merge his passion for affordable housing with his business background as founder and managing director of Weave Social Finance, which created and runs CHAI Debt Fund with co-founder Abby Murray. While “CHAI” may carry significance within the Jewish community, it is

actually an acronym for Colorado Housing Accelerator Initiative. CHAI Fund dedicates itself to providing funding that will house a population that is often called the “working poor” or middle income, earning 60-120% of the average median income in the area.

“These are people who struggle to buy a house or now even struggle to pay rent,” Briscoe says. “To put a roof over their heads, either their personal finances are squeezed, or they squeeze into places that are too small or are poorly maintained.”

CHAI Fund has housing projects around the state of Colorado—from Grand Junction to Walsenburg, from Silverthorne to Denver. In Denver, CHAI partnered with a Filipino immigrant woman who had come to Denver in her thirties, worked hard, acquired multiple rental homes and small apartment

buildings, always keeping the rents affordable. Now, in her eighties, she wanted to consolidate some of her investments in one 82-unit community. By partnering with CHAI, she made the purchase, keeping rents under 30% of a tenant’s income. Through CHAI, her tenants are enrolled in a “tenant equity vehicle,” whereby they share in the profits generated by their housing.

“We help people get into affordable housing and help them get on a path to save for their future,” Briscoe says. “If you are poor or moderate income, you still deserve to live in dignity in a home you can afford.”

*For more information about Ogen Social Loan Fund and CHAI Debt Fund as well as Impact Capital strategy, contact Jen Kraft at [jkraft@jewishcolorado.org](mailto:jkraft@jewishcolorado.org).*

# How the Secure Community Network is Saving Lives

**M**ichael Masters is the National Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Secure Community Network (SCN). The SCN is the national homeland security initiative of the North American Jewish community, formed under the Jewish Federations of North America and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. JEWISHcolorado's Regional Safety & Security program operates in partnership with SCN. When Masters visited JEWISHcolorado, we spoke with him about current trends in safety and security.

**Some people who know about SCN may understand its mission but may not have a clear vision of how that mission relates to their daily lives as they do routine activities. What would you tell them?**

Our goal is that when you are doing those routine things—dropping your kids off at day school, going to synagogue, participating in activities at the JCC—you can feel confident that it is safe and secure. At the end of the day, it's to ensure that Jewish life can not only exist but also grow and flourish. The day that people start questioning whether it is safe to drop their kids off at a

JCC or a day school or camp or to walk to synagogue, that's the day, in my mind, that we have failed as a community, and as a people, to ensure not just security but peace of mind. We at SCN, working with our partners like JEWISHcolorado, don't intend to fail.

**Can you offer a real-world example of how SCN operates?**

I can give you one from today. Our Duty Desk, which is comprised of a team of intelligence analysts who staff our national Jewish Security Operations Command Center (JSOCC) in Chicago, became aware of an individual who stated they wanted to undertake an attack against a Jewish facility. In this instance, the tip was phoned in from a concerned party. The allegation was that this individual not only was potentially violent but was actually renting a motel room across from the Jewish facility itself.

The Duty Desk started to do their work, using our proprietary technology platform known as Project RAIN (Realtime Actionable Intelligence Network, and which allows us—among other things—to mine the surface web, deep web, and dark web. This all happened within a matter of two hours.

They identified relevant details

related to this person and then coordinated with the security director in that community. Working together, they notified state and local law enforcement, the FBI, and the Department of Homeland Security.

That is the same work our Duty Desk does with JEWISHcolorado's [Director of Regional Safety and Security] Phil Niedringhaus so that when a threat comes in or a suspicious person or actor shows up at a facility, Phil is coordinating what is happening in Colorado with a team of our intelligence analysts and professionals around the country.

**During this past year, there have been high profile antisemitic incidents making the news. This past spring, the Anti-Defamation League reported that antisemitic incidents reached an all-time high in the United States in 2021.**

There is no question that all the data we see—from our partners at ADL, from law enforcement, reports which we take in ourselves at SCN and share with our partners (like ADL)—shows an increase in incidents. One observation I would make about those numbers: we can—and should—seek to understand and address why people hate us, why there is a rise



in antisemitism, why hate crime reporting is not reflective of what is actually happening. Those are all important discussions.

But at the same time, let's make sure we are locking the front door and training. We cannot forget that our highest obligation, *Pikuach nefesh*, is the preservation of human life. We have an excellent way of doing that which is investing in community security initiatives and resources to protect and prepare the community so that when something does happen, we are as prepared and as resilient as possible.

**SCN develops training and assessment tools that are used as part of community security initiatives. Can you offer an example of how that training has proven useful?**

January 15, 2023, was the one-year anniversary of hostages being taken at a synagogue in Colleyville, Texas. When the hostages left the building 11 hours after that event began, one of the first things one of the hostages said was, "We were not rescued. We escaped."

One of the reasons those hostages were able to maintain their composure and escape is that they had been trained. Just five months prior, one of our team members at SCN had been to Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville and had done that training. It's the same training that Phil Niedringhaus delivers here in Denver and across the

state to Jewish and non-Jewish organizations.

**So SCN knows that training can make a difference—in some cases the difference between life and death.**

Yes, but it's not enough to train one synagogue or one day school or one JCC. We cannot choose the time or place of the next incident, but we can choose how we prepare. That preparation should be comprehensive. In Colorado, there are 57 synagogues and Chabad congregations, 24 day schools and child and after-care programs, and multiple JCCs and Hillel organizations. Members of all of those organizations and users of their facilities need to be trained to know what to do. That is the work that Phil is doing, supported by his colleagues at SCN and through the leadership at JEWISHcolorado.

**You work in a very serious business. What gives you hope for the future?**

When you walk into any early education center in our community, go into a classroom or visit a Jewish camp, and you look at the children, their energy should remind us why we do this work. Children are what give us hope for our future, and it is our responsibility that future generations should be able to live Jewish lives without fear.

*To learn more about the work of Secure Community Network in Colorado, please contact Renée Rockford at [rrockford@jewishcolorado.org](mailto:rrockford@jewishcolorado.org).*



“Children are what give us hope for our future, and it is our responsibility that future generations should be able to live Jewish lives without fear.”

*Michael Masters  
Secure Community Network  
National Director and  
Chief Executive Officer*

# Jewish Life and Engagement 2023

BY THE NUMBERS



◀ PJ Library

Shipped **4,603** books each month

and hosted **105** PJ events

Jewish Explorers ▶



**2,279** engagements with **772** community members



◀ One Happy Camper

**122** applicants recieved grants to attend **22** different camps

Jewish Student Connection ▶



**5,649** engagements with more than **600** teens at **11** high schools



More than

34,000

interactions  
with participants  
in collaboration

with 25 partner organizations including  
Hillels, religious schools, day schools,  
youth groups, preschools, and camps

Shinshinim ▷



◁ Joyce Zeff Israel Study Tour

65 teens traveled to Poland  
and Israel in 2023

1,021

total program  
participants attended  
more than

YAD ▷  
31 events



◁ Shaliach

More than 2,408 engagements  
in

53 programs connected  
to Israel collaborating with 21 partner  
organizations





Save the Date!

**Celebrate Israel**  
**Walk and Festival**

**Sunday**  
**May 5, 2024**



2022-2023

# JEWISHcolorado Board of Directors

Elizabeth Barrekette

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Rob Kaufmann

Jessica Pivar

John Chanin

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# JEWISHcolorado Corporate Sponsors 2023



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# JEWISHcolorado Grantees Fiscal Year 2023

## Grants supporting Colorado Jewish Life & Community

- *Projects of Impact & Need (PIN)*
- *Staenberg Anything Grants™*
- *Kosher Meals on Wheels*
- *Community Table Lunch Program*
- *Mountain Communities Grants*
- *Community Support Grants*

**\$701,093**

## Grants supporting those in need of emergency assistance

- *Boulder Fire Relief*
- *Ukraine Emergency Relief*
- *Hurricane Ian Emergency Relief*

**\$626,087**

## Grants supporting Jewish Education & Continuity

- *Joyce Zeff IST Scholarships*
- *Early Childhood Scholarships*
- *One Happy Camper Grants*
- *Stuart & Jill Bombel*  
*CU Boulder Hillel Grant*
- *Leadership Award Grants*

**\$371,524**

## Grants supporting Israel & Overseas Programming

(Exclusive of annual dues and payments to global partners including Jewish Federations of North America, the Jewish Agency for Israel, The Joint Distribution Committee, and World ORT)

**\$77,000**

## Grants supporting safety and security upgrades at local synagogues and Jewish nonprofit organizations

**\$24,788**

## Total FY'23 grants

**\$1,800,492**

# Save the Date 2023-2024



## Colorado Gives Day

Tuesday, December 5, 2023

## Israel & Overseas Center Fundraiser

Thursday, January 18, 2024  
7:00 p.m.

## Men's Event

Wednesday, February 7, 2024  
5:30 p.m.

## Jewish Community Relations Council Luncheon

March 13, 2024

## Celebrate Israel

Sunday, May 5, 2024  
8:30 a.m.

## Yom HaZikaron

Sunday, May 12, 2024







**JEWISHcolorado**

BUILDING COMMUNITY TOGETHER

300 S. Dahlia Street  
Denver, Colorado 80246

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED



*This photo was taken at an Allied Jewish Federation of Colorado dinner sometime between 1945 and 1955 where the theme was the battle against antisemitism. We reprint the photo courtesy of the Rocky Mountain Jewish Historical Society and the Beck Archives. Special thanks to Jeanne Abrams and David Fasman.*